

A GUIDE TO ARTICLE WRITING

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BY

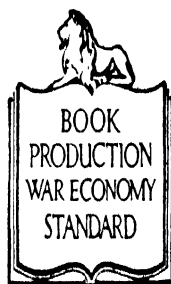
G. J. MATSON

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THE PAPER AND BINDING OF THIS
BOOK CONFORM TO THE AUTHOR-
IZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

Printed in Great Britain by Blackie & Son, Ltd., Glasgow

To the rabbit whose hutch
inspired my first saleable
Manuscript, I proudly dedicate
this book.

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A Guide to Article Writing

FUNNY how some incidents stick in the mind.

I still remember, as if it were yesterday, an incident which broke into my young life over twenty years ago. I can see myself now—hurrying home from school, flinging my bicycle into the shed, racing into the house, and shouting, "It's in! It's in!"

What the daily help thought about me I never stopped to consider. The way her eyes seemed to shoot from their sockets, however, clearly indicated her feelings were far from normal.

The rest of the household, almost in unison, half rose from the tea-table and requested me to make less noise and to remember there was a distinguished visitor to tea.

And, anyhow, *what* was in? And in *what*?

With a flourish that would have done justice to a bogus company promoter spreading out the plans of his proposed new factory, before the eyes of a gullible and monied audience, I opened out a copy of a two-penny gardening paper.

"There!" I exclaimed.

And the distinguished visitor, probably because he found the hospitality of my people so much to his liking, or was anxious to show that he, at least, knew

a genius when he met one, gave me a thump on the back and followed it up with a friendly "Well done, lad".

What, you may now ask, was the object which called forth such excitement and the warm congratulations of a man of substance?

I will tell you.

In one corner of the paper was a short paragraph accompanied by an illustration in line, above which were the words "A Novel Rabbit Hutch"; and at the foot, G. J. Matson!

A short time before I had dared to send an unsolicited contribution to a London editor—and here it was in print.

My first submission and my first acceptance!

In passing let me mention that this first effort of mine found editorial favour because of two things: (a) it was practical, (b) it described something new. I have learned since that articles of this kind are among the easiest to place. About which, more anon.

I happened to strike lucky with my first attempt. It may have been that I was born with the ability to write, and to sell what I had written. I thought so myself—at the time. Spurred on by this initial success I sat down and wrote a score or so other articles, all in a neat round schoolboy hand, and posted them off to editors whose addresses I found on the back pages of newspapers and magazines which reposed in the old-fashioned newspaper case by the side of the chiffonier (late nineteenth century for sideboard!).

In the meantime I received a cheque for 7s. 6d. for

my Rabbit Hutch idea, and visions of easy money, and lots of money, began to float before my eyes. That, I am told, is the kind of experience which usually follows an early success!

But my visions failed to materialize, and several years passed before I again saw my name attached to a printed contribution. My second success, however, proved much more important than the first, and from that time I began to make steady progress until finally a wide free-lancing connexion enabled me to throw up a safe job, as an assistant master in one of the largest boarding schools in the country, and rent an office within a few yards of the "street of ink". Or as Philip Gibbs more aptly, I think, describes it, "The Street of Adventure". (This, by the way, is the title of one of his best books. I know of no work more entertaining, for the writer who aspires to become a full-blooded journalist.)

But to revert to my second success. It happened in this way.

One day I confiscated a copy of *Chums* from one of the pupils in my class who seemed to find it far more entertaining than the French irregular verbs I had set him to learn. At the time I was becoming very interested in photography, and glancing through the magazine which had fallen into my hands (strange how these confiscated papers often prove as irresistible to the master as to the pupil!), the thought struck me that the editor of *Chums* might possibly be interested in a series of short simple articles dealing with the use of a camera.

Accordingly, I drafted a suitable letter, outlining my

idea in full, and sent a typed copy to the editor without delay. It must have been just the feature for which he was looking. Within a few days a reply came back asking me to prepare eight articles as soon as possible. This I did and the series began to appear in print. Before it was half-way through the editor wrote to me again. It was, he said, so popular that he would like to continue it. Could I prepare a further nine articles? Could I! Before the week was out they were in the post and every Saturday morning, for seventeen weeks, I received a cheque for one guinea.

That success brought in its train the genuine writing bug, and I was bitten badly. I got down to the thing in earnest. I read every book and article on the subject I could lay my hands upon. I studied carefully every newspaper and magazine that came within my reach. And I analysed my failures in an effort to find out *why* they had failed.

Do not imagine, gentle reader, that the road to full-time free-lancing was easy after that second success. It was nothing of the kind. It meant six years of plodding, working up a reliable connexion, before I could hang my gown on the door for the last time and say good-bye to school and to the boys who preferred penny dreadfuls to French and Latin verbs.

It may be the ambition of many who read this book to make writing their sole means of a livelihood.

A word to the wise.

Charles Lamb has said that "literature is a bad crutch but a very good walking-stick". There is a good deal of truth in that, and I would strongly advise

anyone *not* to give up safe employment until fully convinced that he can write well enough to sell articles *regularly*. It is not enough to have the *urge* to write. You cannot live on enthusiasm. What you *think* and *feel* you could do if you had more time matters little as well. It is success, *in terms of £ s. d.*, that must be the only deciding factor. If, in your spare time, you are able to knock up *saleable* articles with pleasing regularity, and can number among your friends a score or so of editors who take nearly everything you send them, *then* you can start to think about devoting the whole of your time to writing.

Let me say that once you reach that happy stage there is no life more attractive or more exciting. You are free to go your own way. Every experience is an adventure—an adventure which can probably be turned into hard cash. I number among my friends a handful of free-lance journalists who average a thousand a year from full-time writing. They would not swop places with the man in the office for two thousand a year. On the other hand I know a score of writers who earn anything from £100 to £200 a year in their spare time. They would not throw up a safe job for any sum they *might* earn from their pens.

Some of us, you see, are born gamblers: others prefer a bird in the hand to a dozen in the bush.

Does Influence Count?

N^O. Despite what ninety-nine out of a hundred beginners think, *and* say, the answer is still—No!

Consider, for a minute, the business of publishing. Why do men and women put their money into a publishing business? To lose it? “Absurd,” you say. Yet that is precisely what you imply if you are one of those who assert that the way to success in authorship is to be found through the channel of influence.

Publishers, like other sensible business men, sink their capital in publishing with the sole idea of making it pay dividends. And they know that the only way in which this result can be achieved is by “delivering the goods”.

Why do you purchase a newspaper or a magazine? Is it not that the matter contained in it is likely to entertain, amuse or educate you? You do not buy a paper because a publisher has purchased a manuscript from one of his friends, or from a friend's friend. You do not really care a brass button who wrote the matter—providing it comes up to your expectations.

It is true that editors often go out for big names. But why? Influence? Nothing of the kind. Editors know that big names have a large following of readers, and that circulations (the average editor's nightmare!) are often affected appreciably by the habit readers have of following their favourite writers. But how did these big names become so famous? It needs but a small intellect to grasp the truth—that is, that they owe their following entirely to the fact that they have

the ability to write matter which a large section of the public is anxious to read.

So, you see, this influence bogey is all eyewash!

Have you read the life story of the late Lord Northcliffe? If not, do so: it will encourage you. He started work when most boys are still at school, he had no money and there were no kind friends to give him introductions to benevolent editors. Yet, by sheer hard work and an indomitable courage, he quickly rose to the proprietorship of *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, *Evening News*, and other national papers.

You may not be a Northcliffe, but at the commencement of your career it is as well to foster two, at least, of the qualities which characterized this great journalist. Namely, a desire to work hard, and the ability to smile at disappointments.

The latter is important. In no profession does fate hand out so many hard knocks as in that of writing. It is only fair to add, however, that, conversely, there are many surprises. But without the ability to withstand the former you are not likely to meet with many of the latter.

At the commencement of this section I stated emphatically that influence does not count. Let me now qualify that. It *does* count—but not until you are established.

When you have made friends with a number of editors, and have shown that you can be relied upon to write good articles in an entertaining way, you will find that one editor will mention your name to another. Or, if you meet one of your editor friends personally, and he is in the company of another editor, he will

introduce you and tell his friend what "a good chap you are". Or, when you go to interview an editor you may be able to say that such and such an editor has known you for a number of months and that you have had the pleasure of writing a good many articles for his paper. That fact may probably make a good impression on the editor you are interviewing and he will most likely think that if your work is good enough for such and such a paper it will, without a doubt, be suitable for his.

Since I have been writing this book a friend has mentioned my name to an editor who works in the same office. On this recommendation alone the editor has written and asked me to prepare illustrated articles on *Motor Body Building* and *Caravan Bodies*, each to be paid for at the rate of two guineas per thousand words and 10s. 6d. for each photograph. In his letter the editor says: "I was thinking of getting the photographs taken myself, but Mr. — tells me you can handle this part of the work as well. I will therefore leave them to you and should like four or five for each article."

These last two paragraphs will serve to show you how important it is to get on friendly terms with editors—and as quickly as you can. Do not, however, make the fatal mistake of *pushing* yourself on them. I *have* known free-lances, on the strength of having sold a ten-and-sixpenny article, to call on the obliging editor straight away and start addressing him with an affectionate "Hello, old man!"

By all means call on an editor if you get half a chance, but when you go make sure you have one or two sound

ideas to put before him. Talk to him in a business-like manner and let him see you are keen and anxious to make headway. But do not talk too much. Listen to what *he* has to say. I have never been to see an editor yet without coming away with ideas for at least one or two saleable articles.

I get a "kick" out of picking editors' brains! You will do the same.

Can Anyone learn how to write Saleable Articles?

THIS is a natural question to ask. It is one I have been asked hundreds of times. And the answer is—No!

Never mind what the advertisements say. It is foolish to imagine that everyone can learn how to write saleable articles. Many cannot even compose a decent letter. If, however, you feel within you an *urge to write*, then you may quickly learn how to arrange and relate facts in a saleable form.

The urge to write: that is the acid test. No one can be taught article writing who does not feel that he *must* write.

The very fact that you have purchased this book goes a long way to prove that you, reader, have this urge within you. Follow carefully, then, the hints and suggestions in the pages that follow and success may soon be yours.

Be a Camera-Journalist

WHEN a person coins a new word it is right and proper that he should give a definition of it.

Here, then, is my definition of "camera-journalist":

A *camera-journalist* is a writer who has sufficient foresight to see that writing and photography have much in common and that, by combining the two, he can add appreciably to his income.

That may not be the dictionary compiler's idea of a good definition, but then I am not compiling a dictionary. I am setting out to show you how to make money as a writer, and the above description is intended to awaken your interest to the fact that the question of becoming a *camera-journalist* is one worthy of careful consideration.

I have mentioned this question to several free-lance writers, who make a fair income from their writing, and in every instance I have been met with one of two answers: (1) "I cannot afford the price of a suitable camera;" (2) "I am not really interested in photography and know nothing about it."

Let us look more closely at these answers.

"I cannot afford the price of a suitable camera." When I have asked for a price to be named it has invariably been within the neighbourhood of £25. Listen. I, myself, have sold hundreds of illustrated articles and photographs and I have never owned a camera costing more than £15. And further, the majority of the pictures I have sold have been taken with a camera costing less than £5.

I have already mentioned the series of illustrated articles I sold to *Chums*. Most of the illustrations for this series were taken with a box camera! A short time ago I had a large picture on the back page of the *Daily Mirror*—it was, in fact, the only picture on it—and *that was taken with a camera which cost only 12s. 6d.*

Perhaps now you are beginning to think differently about the price of a camera. If you are, let me settle the question in your mind for all time. It is *not* necessary to have an expensive camera. In these days of film perfection it is possible to get excellent results with the cheapest of cameras.

Do not worry about a plate camera. Roll film is easier to use and, for general purposes, gives just as good results. A lens aperture of $f/4.5$ is desirable, though not absolutely essential. A speed of $1/2000$ th second is also an advantage and you should get a camera with this speed at round about the figure mentioned. This figure, by the way, is for a brand-new instrument; a second-hand one would cost about a third less.

Of the two answers, however, the second is the more prevalent. Many writers possess the mistaken idea that one must be an expert photographer in order to sell photographs. Do not believe it. Very little technical knowledge is needed to produce finished prints up to publication standard. By far the most important thing is *knowing what to take*. And if you have a good news sense you should have a good picture sense. You will read more about this side of the work later on.

Any shilling booklet on photography will teach you the elementary principles of the science and will give you a working knowledge of stops and speeds. With that knowledge there are millions of subjects you can photograph—all of which may form the basis of illustrated articles.

It is not advisable to do your own developing—although the business is a thrilling one—especially since you can get a professional to do the job for a few coppers. To do it yourself costs almost as much and takes a considerable time.

With enlarging it is different. If you can possibly afford your own enlarger, do so. Not only will you be able to make enlargements at a fraction of the cost charged by the expert, but you will be able to get just the enlargements you require.

A suitable enlarger costs as little as £6 or £8, and to produce prints of half-plate size—which is quite suitable for most press purposes—costs only 2d. a print.

The process of enlarging is by no means a difficult one, and once you get into it you will be fascinated by it. You do not require a special dark-room. For myself, I pin a few sheets of brown paper over the window and use the kitchen. Neither need you work in darkness. You can, in fact, use a yellow light, of fair brilliancy.

The only chemicals needed are Acid Fixing Salts—which you merely drop into water—and a developer. This latter can be purchased ready made up and only requires the addition of a little water.

All enlargements are made on bromide paper, of which there are many grades and surfaces. That

most suitable for press purposes is black and white with a glossy finish.

When the prints have been developed, fixed, and washed they must be glazed, a glazed surface giving a better block. This, again, is simple. Squeegee the prints flat on to a ferrotype plate (costing 1s. and large enough to accommodate four at a time), and when dry they will peel off and reveal a highly glazed surface.

No, there is nothing in ordinary free-lance photography which should stop any writer from having a shot at it. Get clear, sharp pictures, on glazed black and white glossy paper, and, if your subjects are good, you will hold your own with anyone.

Payment to Expect

ONE of the pleasures of writing is the uncertainty of its rewards. Seldom does the ordinary free-lance know how much an accepted article will bring in—until the welcome cheque arrives.

The average rate of payment is about thirty shillings a thousand words: the general rate is a guinea a thousand. This is until you get known or are lucky enough to turn in some really exclusive matter. Then you may command as much as ten guineas a thousand, or even more.

The worst paying markets, in my own experience, are the religious papers, gardening papers, and a few trade papers. Payment here is sometimes as low as fifteen shillings a thousand—and I have known it to work out at little more than ten-and-six a thousand.

The best paying are the London dailies—where six guineas a thousand is often paid—and a few of the more successful magazines like *Strand*, *Pearson's Magazine*, *John Bull*, *Tit-Bits*, and so on.

I should say that fifty per cent of papers pay an ordinary rate of a guinea a thousand, and it is as well for the beginner to keep this figure in mind.

The actual writing of a thousand-word article should take little more than an hour. If, therefore, you could write steadily through a forty-eight hour week, and sell everything you wrote, you would command an enviable salary. But you will not sell everything you write—unless you are exceptionally lucky—and you will not be able to write steadily for forty-eight hours a week. Some of your time must be given over to the collecting of ideas and a searching for new markets.

You will see, however, that if you write only a few hours a week, and can learn to turn out good work, you will be earning a fair income from your writing.

The rate of payment for published photographs is more standardized than that for published articles. For photographs reproduced in London and Provincial newspapers there is a fixed scale, the following being the rates:

London:

Up to 2½ sq. in.	..	..	..	12s. 6d.
Up to 15 sq. in.	..	..	..	15s.
Up to 30 sq. in.	..	..	..	17s. 6d.
Up to 50 sq. in.	..	..	..	27s. 6d.
Up to 80 sq. in.	..	..	..	42s. 6d.
Over 80 sq. in.	..	..	..	90s.

Provinces:

Up to 2½ sq. in.	..	..	..	7s. 6d.
Up to 50 sq. in.	..	..	..	10s. 6d.
50 sq. in. to 80 sq. in.	..	..	..	15s.
Over 80 sq. in.	..	..	..	17s. 6d.

These, of course, are *minimum* rates. There is nothing to prevent an editor from making payment far in excess of the fees set out in this scale, and, in fact, bigger fees often *are* paid. Especially is this so with the London newspapers. For an exclusive picture of something with a wide and important interest as much as £500 may be paid! Few, however, are able to secure a scoop of this kind, once in a lifetime, and the average free-lance can seldom expect payment much in excess of the minimum.

Editors of the majority of magazines pay 10s. 6d. or 7s. 6d. a picture; the former being the more general rate. Seldom is this rate exceeded, although I have known it, on occasions, to reach 15s. or a guinea. When this has been the case, however, the picture has been of outstanding merit, or has had a particularly wide appeal.

Occasionally the rate drops as low as 5s. There are only a very few editors who look for pictures at this price, and the majority do so only because the profits made by their publications are small.

Photographs usually earn fees apart from the articles they accompany—when illustrated articles are submitted—and payment is made at so much per thousand words of text, plus so much per picture reproduced. With magazines the payment for article and photo-

graphs comes in one cheque; newspapers sometimes settle the two accounts separately.

When do Editors Pay?

IF you take up a copy of *The Authors', Playwrights' and Composers' Handbook* you will find that some editors pay *on acceptance*; others *on publication*.

Payment on acceptance means that a cheque is sent to the author within a few days of the editor deciding to publish it—irrespective of publication date. There are several papers which follow this plan. Among them are all the magazines published by D. C. Thomson & Co., several of the Pearson group, and the majority of House Magazines.

Payment on publication means that a cheque does not follow until after a contribution has appeared in print. All the London and Provincial newspapers follow this plan, as do those in the Amalgamated Press group, the Religious Tract Society group (*Boy's Own Paper*, &c.), the Link House group, and most of the religious magazines.

Payment on publication does not necessarily mean that a cheque follows *immediately* on publication—although this is the case where the Amalgamated Press publications are concerned—but one usually has to wait until about the middle of the month following publication. In the case of the Religious Tract Society group payment is not made until the end of the quarter in which publication occurs.

The majority of papers have set dates for making payments, and it is not advisable to start sending

letters, asking for payments due, until five or six weeks have elapsed after publication. Then, if you like, you can send a courteous letter of inquiry; but never address it to the editor. In the majority of cases payment is none of his business and he will not thank you if you begin to worry him about it. The person to whom your letter should be addressed is the cashier.

When sending a letter of this kind be careful to mention all the necessary details. Do not say, merely, "I have not yet received payment for the article of mine you published. Will you please look into this and let me have a cheque immediately." The cashier may not take the trouble to find out *what* article of yours has been published. No, when you write mention the title of the article, the issue in which it was published, and the page on which it appeared. You will be more likely to get an answer (and a cheque!) if you do this.

Another phrase frequently met with, in connexion with payment, is *payment by arrangement*. Some editors speak of it as *payment according to merit*. This means that the paper has no set rates, but that the editor varies payment according to the value of the contributions he accepts. Usually he suggests a figure, when writing to say he is willing to use an article, and asks the writer to let him know if this figure is acceptable.

It is unwise to worry too much about payment. The thing to do is to get plenty of manuscripts accepted. You will find then that editors' cheques come along with pleasing regularity—irrespective of payment arrangements.

Copyright

IF you are going to do any free-lance work worth speaking about it is as well to have some knowledge regarding copyright.

What is copyright? To whom does it belong? When is it infringed? These are but three of the many questions connected with it which are liable to crop up at some time or other in the experience of every writer.

Every piece of original literary work committed to paper is copyright and the copyright is invested in the person who produces it. Even the letters you write to your friends are copyright and, legally speaking, you alone have the sole right to reproduce them.

Original writing becomes copyright as you commit it to paper, and it is not necessary to register it at any place, or do anything whatsoever, in order to claim the sole copyright as your own. You acquire the copyright automatically.

It follows from this that every article you write is immediately made copyright and that you, alone, have the power to authorize its use. When you submit an article to an editor, however, you imply that you are willing to grant him a licence to publish your article, and, unless there is any agreement to the contrary, he is at liberty to do this, providing he pays you the rate usually paid by his paper for similar contributions. But he must not go further. He may not, for instance, give permission for your article to be reproduced in another periodical.

Another interesting point to note here is that, if an

editor accepts an article for publication in one particular paper he is not at liberty to publish it in another paper—unless he has received the permission of the writer.

The owner of a copyright may do as he pleases with it. If he wishes he may dispose of it entirely. If he does this he has no further claim in respect of it. It is like having a taxi. All the time the taxi is yours you can keep hiring it out and draw an income for the use of it. Once you sell the taxi to another party, however, you have no further claim in respect of it, however much money it earns in hire service work.

Very often an editor will ask for *full rights* or *all rights*. When this is the case, and you accept the fee offered, you must remember that you have parted with all further interest in the work. Is this worth while? Generally speaking, yes. (Here, of course, I am thinking more particularly of short articles.) The average short article is seldom saleable in more than one market, and nothing is to be gained, therefore, by refusing a cheque simply because the editor has asked for the copyright. He does not do this because he hopes to make something out of your work, but because he does not want to see articles which have appeared in his paper appearing a little later in some other paper. Most editors like their publications to be exclusive.

You will find that many papers print a clause, regarding copyright, on the backs of their cheques. It is important that you read this before endorsing the cheque. In such cases your signature is more than an endorsement—it serves to sign away your copyright, in as far as the clause specifies.

If an editor publishes your article, and does not ask for *full rights* (or there is no clause on the back of the cheque to that effect), it is taken for granted that all he has acquired has been first publication rights. This means you are at liberty to offer your manuscript, without alteration, to another editor—providing you mention the fact that it has already been published once. There are some editors who will buy manuscripts which have already been published; but they are few and far between, and when they are found their rates of payment are usually very low.

If you become a writer under a “contract of service”—that is, join the staff of a newspaper or periodical—the copyright of your work becomes invested in your employer, unless you have a definite agreement to the contrary.

Ideas and information cannot be made copyright . . . only the manner in which they are expressed. This is a very important point to bear in mind. It means that you are at liberty to take facts from any published article or book and use them in your own articles and books—providing you present them in an entirely different form. You must not lift whole passages, or even paraphrase whole passages. Providing you take the facts only, and clothe them in your own words, you cannot be held guilty of infringing a copyright.

I do not hesitate to state that the majority of the facts given in this section I am now writing have been gleaned from other sources. In no way, however, does this section resemble any of the six sources from which the facts have been derived. The majority of articles which appear in print would not have been possible

if the authors had not been at liberty to use facts and ideas already mentioned by other writers.

The writer who submits photographs with some, or all, of his articles must bear in mind that these are copyright too. An editor, however, seldom attempts to purchase the copyright of a photograph and merely pays a reproduction fee.

While there is little to be said against parting with the copyright of a short article, there is a good deal to be said against parting with that of a photograph. Never surrender a negative, or assign the full copyright of a photograph, until you have given the matter very careful consideration and not then until you are certain you are getting a fair price. I have already said that an editor seldom asks for the copyright and this means it is possible—and permissible—to go on selling the same picture over and over again, for an unlimited number of times. This fact proves how foolish it is to part with copyright, except under exceptional circumstances. I know of pictures which have sold over 150 times and brought in over £100 in reproduction fees! Some of the prints in my own collection have sold over a score of times, and it would need a very attractive offer to induce me to part with the negatives of some of them.

When submitting photographs it is not necessary, as in the case of articles, to mention that they have appeared in print before. If a picture appeals to him, or happens to be just the thing for his immediate needs, an editor will not worry about its having been published before.

The question of copyright crops up a good deal in

connexion with competitions, and it is never wise to enter a print until you have studied the copyright rule carefully. Some promoters insist on copyright in return for a prize of 10s. 6d. I have even known it to be expected when a prize of only 5s. has been paid. This is absurd! The copyright should *never* be expected of a print winning less than £5. A print which is good enough to carry off a guinea in one competition might easily win £10 in another. How foolish it is, then, to part with the copyright for the smaller sum!

A friend of mine, who has won scores of cash prizes in various photographic contests, once put before me a very interesting suggestion regarding the surrender of copyright in return for small prizes. This is what she said:

“ I think there are two courses open to the competitor. He naturally does not want to miss the chance of winning a big prize yet hesitates to risk a good negative for a small one. In some cases one can take more than one view of a subject. Personally I always do this when I feel I am on a good thing and one does not then mind sacrificing one of the shots. When this is not practicable one can always enter for the competition. If one wins a big prize, well and good. If not, *one can refuse to take the prize*. The copyright only passes on acceptance of the money and one is not obliged to accept it.”

Shall I use a Pen-Name?

GENERALLY speaking—no.

The use of a pen-name in journalism is not only unnecessary; it is often a nuisance. When you are sending out several articles a week it is quite easy to forget, now and again, that you have adopted a pen-name, and letters and manuscripts are apt to go out bearing your proper signature, thereby causing confusion.

With fiction it is different. Authors often assume pen-names because their own would look clumsy on book jackets. *Adam Broome*, for instance, hides the identity of Godfrey Warden James; *Sapper*, of Lt.-Col. Cyril McNeile; *Boyd Cabls*, of Col. E. A. Ewart; *Marion West*, of Dorothea Louise Wilford; and *Graham Seton*, of Lt.-Col. G. S. Hutchinson.

Occasions when the use of a pen-name may be advisable are when you are writing articles on health, law, child welfare, and similar subjects. Such articles often appear as being written by "A Doctor", "A Nurse", "A Lawyer", and so on.

You may also like to adopt a pen-name if ever you are asked to conduct a special feature—such as a column of humour, or a page of children's matter. If you do use a pen-name in such a connexion it is interesting to note that you can claim copyright in it.

Some time ago a woman who contributed a regular feature to the *Jewish Chronicle*, under the pen-name "Aunt Naomi", brought an action against the paper to prevent the continued use of the name after she had

ceased to be a member of the staff. "The name in such a connexion," said Mr. Justice Eve, "constitutes part of the owner's stock-in-trade, and its use without his or her authority may inflict grievous harm and result in pecuniary loss."

Work Systematically

BEFORE getting well into the subject of this book I want to impress upon you the need of working systematically. You will not get very far unless you do this. No matter whether you want to make free-lancing a whole-time job or only a profitable hobby—you must work to some sort of a time-table.

Try to write *something* every day. Even five minutes' work is better than none. If you can think of nothing else to write about sit down and fill a page describing the antics of your dog or the habits of your wife.

If the urge to write is really in you you will not mind writing every day, and as the habit grows so will you come to derive more and more pleasure from it. Take a piece of white card and print on it, in block letters: I MUST WRITE SOMETHING EVERY DAY. Pin the card over your desk and let it serve as a constant reminder that success depends very largely upon your putting this suggestion into practice.

Take no notice of those who tell you that it is impossible to write unless you *feel* like it. If your own mind suggests the same thought, ignore that too. It is nonsense. Many writers have found they produce their best work when they drive themselves to it. After all, it is only a matter of concentration. When you

have taught yourself to concentrate you will find it possible to work at any time and in any place.

How, do you think, would newspaper reporters fare if they had to wait for inspiration before writing and sending in their copy? Or if they had to seek the comfort of an easy-chair or the seclusion of a study before they could put their thoughts on paper? We should soon be reading news a week old. A reporter does not find it easy, at first, to write at any time and in any place, but by forcing himself to it he soon acquires the art, and his writing suffers little in consequence.

Train yourself to work in the same way and not only will your output be increased but your income will go up as well.

A Word about Length

THE question of length is an important one and should be studied carefully. It is a mistake to imagine that, providing the subject is all right, *any* length is suitable for *any* paper. On the contrary, unsuitable length is frequently a cause of rejection.

To say all there is to say about length would need several pages. I can do little more here than give you a few general hints.

The first of these is *never write articles of less than 400 words*. Not only is the demand for such short contributions so slight as to be almost non-existent but, when you *do* succeed in placing one, payment received seldom covers the trouble taken. (Paragraphs and letters are different. These must not be classed as short articles.) Even for the 400-word or 500-word

article there is not as much demand now as there was a few years back. The majority of newspapers use these lengths but, unfortunately, they do not publish as many of these short articles as they once did.

The popular weeklies—*Answers*, *Tit-Bits*, *Pearson's Weekly*, *Weekly Telegraph*, and so on—still fill up pages with 400-word or 500-word articles and the same lengths also find favour with the editors of juvenile publications.

The articles most in demand are undoubtedly those of 1000 to 1500 words—with or without illustrations. Articles of this length are worth writing. One can usually do justice to a subject in a thousand words or so, and the payment received for the finished work makes the writing of it worth while. Most weeklies and many of the monthlies favour this length.

High-class monthlies—like *Strand*, *Pearson's Magazine*, *Nash's*, and so on—feature longer articles. For these a length of 4000 or 5000 words is not at all unsuitable.

Some editors vary lengths according to the number of illustrations. The editor of *Great Thoughts*, for instance, once commissioned me to write an article on Stroebeck and mentioned that the length should be "2000 words if illustrated, but 1500 words if accompanied by one illustration". The editor of *Amateur Photographer* does not pay so much per thousand words and so much per illustration (as is the usual rule), but so much per page—irrespective of whether it is text alone, or text and illustrations mixed. Moreover, he seldom uses an article longer than two page length. Thus length, where this market is concerned, depends entirely upon the number of illustrations which are used. The editor of *Teacher's World* is another who

thinks in pages, rather than in the number of words, and here again the number of illustrations used affects the length.

Some editors require articles of set lengths. *John o'London's Weekly*, for instance, uses articles of 450 words, or multiples of 450 only. A 450-word article just fills one column. Other editors like their articles to fill a page—and no more.

Because lengths are so important it is very necessary to study a few issues of a newspaper or magazine, to which you hope to contribute, so that you may have a good idea of the lengths most favoured. You can then make your own contribution fill one of these lengths.

Why Manuscripts are Rejected

IN the last section I pointed to unsuitable length as a common reason for rejection. Here are further reasons:

1. *Lack of reader interest.* When you first begin to think about an article it is a good plan to ask yourself: "Is this article likely to interest at least eighty per cent of the readers of any paper; and, if so, what paper?" Unless you are certain you can answer this question satisfactorily it is as well to leave the article alone. Except in certain special instances editors will not publish articles for minorities. Do not overlook the fact, however, that a subject which might interest no more than five per cent of the readers of one paper might easily interest nearly every reader of another paper. An article on teaching methods, for instance, would

have little interest for the editor of the *News of the World*, but would probably be just the thing for the editor of *Teacher's World*.

This question of finding the right market for an article is an important one. Many manuscripts are rejected for no other reason than that the writers have failed to make an intelligent study of markets. As editor of a magazine for writers I once received an article on gramophones! In an effort to help my contributor I pointed out his mistake to him. He replied to the effect that he had never seen a copy of my paper, but that he *thought* it existed to publish the articles of unknown writers! Some of my friends in editorial offices have told me of similar cases. The majority of them would be funny—did they not represent so much misplaced energy on the part of beginners. However good your work, you will never make a success of writing if you send it to the wrong markets. How can you?

2. *Weak subject-matter.* If you were asked to sit down to a dinner consisting only of soup and biscuits and cheese, you would feel far from satisfied. You would wonder what had happened to the three or four courses in between. Editors are getting manuscripts every day which are just as incomplete; and every day these same manuscripts are finding their way back to those who wrote them.

If you have not sufficient facts to fill an article of the required length—wait until you have. You can seldom give an editor too many facts, but it is very easy to serve up too few.

3. *Too much padding.* "Padding" is a common

word in editorial circles and it means simply that an article contains too many unnecessary words and phrases. Padded articles are like boomerangs; they go out only to come back.

It is very nice to know that an editor pays two guineas for 1000 words, but it is foolish to use 1000 words for the writing up of a 500-word article in the hope that the editor will pay for the 500 words of worthless matter. He will *not*, and the sooner a writer realizes this the better.

Read carefully through the following short article. It is, I think, a fair example of the work turned out by many beginners. If you count the words you will see there are 206. In the form in which it appeared, however, there were only 139. (It was used to fill an odd corner of a children's page.) Here it is:

"Angora rabbits with their lovely thick, long white coats want special care during these warm and sultry days. Their hutches are important. See that all of them are placed so that they get the morning or evening sun only. Face them east or west. They must be scrupulously clean or the health of the rabbits will suffer.

"See, too, that you give your pets plenty of cool green food at meals. They should have as much of this as possible. Instead of warm mashies make arrangements for giving them a handful of white oats, and rye or wheat occasionally.

"Water is also important. Be sure that there is plenty of cool, clean water always available for them.

"You have no doubt noticed that their coats tend to fall out in the hot weather. Give them a thorough

brushing daily, if possible, and do not get unduly worried if you find that a great deal of their hair seems to come out. Actually, of course, your bunnies should be plucked or clipped as soon as the hot weather comes. Both methods are satisfactory. In plucking you pull out the long hairs two or three at a time. This, you will find, leaves the short coat beneath."

Read through the article sentence by sentence, cut out as many words as you can and rewrite any phrase you think needs rewriting. When you have finished see how close you are to the original, which is as follows:

"Angora rabbits, with their lovely thick coats, want especial care in the summer. See that their hutches are placed so that they get the morning or evening sun only. These hutches must be scrupulously clean.

"See, too, that your pets have as much cool green food at meals as possible, and instead of warm mashes, give them a handful of white oats, and rye or wheat occasionally.

"Cool, clean water should always be available for them.

"Their coats will tend to fall out in the hot weather. Brush them daily and do not be worried if a great deal of hair seems to come out. Actually your bunnies should be plucked or clipped as soon as the hot weather comes. In plucking you pull out the long hairs two or three at a time, leaving the short coat beneath."

4. *Incorrect facts.* I am aware that, strictly speaking, a *fact* cannot be *incorrect*, but this title will, I think, best convey my meaning. It is very necessary to make certain that everything you give in an article as fact *is* fact. If an editor discovers one small error he

will most likely return your manuscript, thinking that other parts of it may be inaccurate also.

If you are not absolutely certain about a particular fact it is best to leave it out altogether. Especially is this so when your facts relate to persons or places or to persons who are dead but whose close relations survive. The majority of editors these days are frightened by the libel laws—and not without reason.

The reasons given above relate chiefly to the composition of a manuscript. Any one of these may cause rejection. There are, however, other reasons for rejection which are in no way connected with the make-up of an article. These may be summarized as follows:

1. The editor already has an article, of a similar character, on hand awaiting publication.
2. The editor has published an article on the same subject in a recent issue.
3. The article is not in keeping with a paper's policy.
4. The editor may have sufficient material on hand for several issues and is not ready to consider more at the time of submission.
5. There may be a regular contributor supplying the editor with the kind of material contained in your article.

Why Photographs are Rejected

AN editor is not likely to return a photograph because he has one, of a similar character, on hand awaiting publication; or because he has published one on the same subject in a recent issue; or because he has a regular contributor supplying him with the

same type of picture. There are, none the less, several reasons which may prompt him to reject your photograph. Here are some of them.

1. *Picture does not "tell a story"*. Any photograph, apart from purely landscape pictures, must "tell a story" if it is to appeal to an editor. By this I mean that you must see at a glance what was taking place when the picture was taken, or that the picture illustrates something with a story behind it. Moreover, what was "taking place" and the "story" must have a wide interest.

The other day a friend of mine handed me a batch of prints to criticize for him. The first one I picked up showed a little girl standing beside an attractive-looking terrier, seated on its haunches. This picture appealed strongly to the person who took it—simply because he knew the child and knew the dog. For an editor or reader, however, who knows neither child nor dog, the picture lacks interest. It is regarded as a pleasing family snap and nothing more; of interest to the family circle but possessing no appeal beyond it.

What a difference, however, if the terrier had got hold of the little girl's jumper and the two were playing tug-of-war with it! A suitable expression on the child's face and the picture might easily have been saleable in a dozen markets.

If your pictures "tell a story" they are more than half-way to acceptance. Editors can always find room for good action pictures. This is an important point to bear in mind.

2. *Picture is technically poor*. It is little use your pictures telling a story, however, if they are not tech-

nically good. In these days, newspapers and magazines set a fairly high standard and photographs are not acceptable if they do not come up, within reason, to this standard. Let me hasten to add, however, that the magazine standard is far below exhibition standard, and the idea behind a picture counts for a lot. The chief thing to aim at is a *sharp* picture. The main portion, forming the subject, must be sharply outlined. There must be no blur. The only way in which you can get your pictures sharp, of course, is to get correct focussing, correct exposure, correct timing, and no camera movement. These things come with experience. Until you have learnt to handle your camera correctly take careful notes of every exposure you make and compare them with the finished print. In this way you soon learn how to get a sharp picture under almost any conditions.

3. *Picture is untrimmed.* Too few amateurs neglect the all-important business of trimming their prints. Not every print needs to be trimmed, but there is no doubt that a good many can be improved considerably, and made to appear far more attractive, if parts of them are removed.

For trimming purposes I always use two L-shaped pieces of cardboard. These I move about freely until the space bounded by their inner edges pleases me as a picture. When I have made my decision I mark round the boards carefully with pencil and then cut along the pencil lines with a sharp penknife held tight against a steel rule.

When trimming prints there are one or two important points to bear in mind.

In the first place you must consider the centre of interest. Every picture has this centre and the position of it often does much to improve, or mar, the attractiveness of a print.

In every picture there is generally some thing, or some person, to which, or to whom, the attention should be attracted first. It is seldom difficult to find, for the eye instinctively wanders towards it. In a good picture, however, this person or thing is not *quite* in the middle of the print, but is a shade to the right or left and a little below or above it. It is a good plan to divide the print roughly into thirds vertically, and thirds horizontally. Where these thirds intersect are good positions for the centre of interest.

Secondly, there is always the size and shape to be considered. Square pictures seldom look attractive; neither do ovals nor circles. It is advisable, therefore, to keep to an oblong shape, and this can be varied considerably. Long narrow prints, or tall thin ones, however, should be avoided. These are useful, sometimes, for albums, but are seldom any good commercially.

Thirdly, do not be afraid of trimming too harshly. A print often needs a third cutting away to make it look its best. Do not allow too much foreground to remain. An inch or two of sky at the top—unless, of course, it contains plenty of cloud detail—is also out of place. Often, too, objects get in at the sides and are not wanted. Trim all these off and you will then have a picture which will probably surprise you.

4. *Print is not large enough.* The Photographic Press Agencies seldom send round prints to editors

which are less than 12" × 10" in size. They realize that the bigger a print the better a subject looks. I do not advise the ordinary free-lance to go to the expense of making prints of this size, but I do think it is unwise to submit anything smaller than ½ plate. If you can go to whole plate, so much the better. In any case, *never* submit small contact prints. Apart from the fact that they do not do a subject justice they are usually far too small for editorial purposes.

A Word about Style

I EXPECT many readers to register surprise when I say that the style of an article is by no means the most important thing about it.

Do not misunderstand me.

I do not mean by this that an editor ignores a writer's style. It is a fact, however, that those who are responsible for filling the magazine pages of newspapers, and those who edit the popular weeklies and monthlies, pay more attention to the actual subject-matter than to anything else. Make a note of this here and now. It does not matter how well you write—if you have nothing new or original to say you are wasting time by worrying an editor with your manuscript.

Do not force your style. Write naturally. In a note to contributors the editor of *Men Only* suggested that the best way to write an article suitable for that magazine was to write an ordinary letter, on an interesting subject, and after writing it to cross out the "Dear Sir" and "Yours truly".

Do not try to imitate the style of another writer,

however successful he may be. If you write naturally you will probably cultivate a style of your own, which will be just as pleasing.

Avoid overworked and misused words. The words *definite* and *definitely*, for instance, are often used unnecessarily. To write of *a definite decision* is wrong, all decisions being definite. *In few instances* is better replaced by *seldom*; *a degree of* means no more than *some*; and *largely* conveys the same meaning as *in large measure*.

Terrific and *tremendous* are often used when actually no terror or fear is implied. *Help* is nearly always a better word than *assist* or *assistance*. *Percentage* is wrongly used when it is not a matter of percentage.

Say *half* instead of *fifty per cent*; *man* or *woman* instead of *person* or *individual*; *many* instead of *numerous*; *after* instead of *subsequently to*; *often* instead of *frequently*.

It would be possible to fill several pages with similar examples, but those given are sufficient to show you what to guard against.

Most newspaper offices have a list of "Do's and Don'ts" for use by regular correspondents and sub-editors. Here are a few extracts from such a book:

Avoid ending a sentence with *&c.* and *however*.

Don't use involved or inverted sentences. Aim at crispness and brevity.

Even the youngest babies have sex; don't annoy the mother by referring to her baby as "it".

Self-made men do not really "begin life" as boot-blacks or pit-boys; say "began to work as a boot-black".

Be sparing in the use of capitals; words in common use that do not need them are *police-court*, *town councillor*, *parish church*, *anarchist*, *atheist*, *dreadnought*, *herculean*, *lascar*, *morris dance*, *negro*, *shares* (ord., def., pref.), *soviet*, *titanic*.

The following phrases should be avoided: Cast a gloom, sickening thud, a struggle ensued, speculation is rife, whilst engaged in (whilst, amongst, and amidst, by the way, should always be written while, among, amid), was the recipient of, caused a great sensation, distressing fatality, tragic death, divested himself of his clothing, literally (literally snowed under), residence (when applied to poor people and mean streets).

Avoid redundancies as in the following list: Dead body, drowning fatality, surrounding circumstances, knots per hour (*knots* implies the time as well as the distance), suddenly and without any warning, come out (into the open).

Use Short Words

NEVER use a long word when a shorter one will do.

It is nice to have command over a large vocabulary and to be able to use more uncommon words than most of your fellows. The temptation to air them is great, but you must learn to withstand it. Many editors have assured me that the simpler the language the better they like it.

Write so that anyone can understand what you have written. Be lucid. Study the works of the late Thomas Hardy and you will quickly see how attractive a simple

style can be. The average reader gets no pleasure from an article if he is obliged to read it with a dictionary by his side.

Do not let these remarks, however, lead you to write articles which are made up of words of one or two syllables only. If you do this your style will become flat and uninteresting. Vary the length of your words a good deal—but stick to simple words.

Sentences and Paragraphs

DURING the last few years I have criticized hundreds of articles, and I do not think I exaggerate when I say that more than half of them have contained sentences and paragraphs which were far too long. I have even read articles of 500 words in which there were no paragraphs at all! And it is quite common to find paragraphs, a page of typescript in length, which consist of one sentence only!

Perhaps this is a fault of which you have been guilty yourself. Take two or three of your rejected manuscripts and see how many sentences and paragraphs they contain. The examination will probably surprise you.

Generally speaking, an article of 400 words should contain six or seven paragraphs and at least twice that number of sentences. This used not to be the rule a decade or so ago. In the early part of the century editors favoured long, drawn-out paragraphs. Now they are all in favour of the short paragraph.

If your sentences are short your style becomes crisp. It is desirable that your style should be like this. Long sentences make for clumsiness. It must *never*

be necessary for an editor to read a sentence twice before grasping its meaning. If he is a busy editor he will not do it; he will probably send your manuscript back by the next post.

Never commence an article with a long sentence. Use a short sentence with plenty of punch. Follow it up with another short sentence and *then*, if you like, introduce a longer one. Two short sentences to one long one is a good proportion and helps to balance an article. You must, however, vary the order. Otherwise your writing will become monotonous.

The same thing applies to paragraphs. If you vary the lengths of these, and do not make any unduly long, your article will have a more attractive appearance when in print.

Important Parts of Speech

THE two most important parts of speech, where the writing of articles is concerned, are *Verbs* and *Adjectives*.

Let us deal with *verbs* first.

If you cast your mind back to your schooldays, and to the lessons in English Grammar, you will doubtless recall that verbs have VOICES. Of these there are two—*Active* and *Passive*.

What is the difference? Put into very simple language it is just this:

When something is made *to do* something the verb is said to be in the ACTIVE voice.

When something has something *done to it* the verb is said to be in the PASSIVE voice.

Notice particularly the words in italics and then consider these examples:

The dog chases the cat. What is happening here? The dog is *doing something*. It is chasing the cat. Therefore it is the ACTIVE voice which is being used.

The cat is being chased by the dog. Here we have something different. This sentence does not tell us, in a direct manner, what something is *doing* (although, of course, we know by the sense of it), but, rather, what something is *having done to it*. The cat is being chased. The verb, therefore, is in the PASSIVE voice.

Is this quite clear to you? If not, go over the above again, sentence by sentence, until you understand it thoroughly. It is important that you should do this. Why? Simply because editors *always favour the Active Voice*. If you would test the truth of this you have only to take up a few of the leading newspapers and magazines and read some of the articles printed in them.

It is easy to see why the Active Voice is favoured. It is more direct. It needs fewer words to describe the same fact. Both sentences given above as examples mean exactly the same, but while five words only are used in the first, eight are necessary in the second.

Use of the Passive Voice may help to spoil the chances of your manuscripts. If you make constant use of it editors will suspect you are still an amateur! And that they must never do.

Regarding *adjectives*, I would say just this: Never use more than are necessary. One of the commonest faults beginners make is to fill an article with unnecessary adjectives. It is a good plan to go through

every finished article you write and strike out every adjective you possibly can. You will be surprised how this practice will improve your style.

Have you ever noticed how fresh a flower bed looks when you have weeded it? Your article may take on the same freshness if you cut out the needless adjectives.

Select the adjectives you do use with care. Do not, for instance, write of a *sudden* arrival when what you really mean is an *unexpected* arrival. Remember that each adjective you use is directly connected with one particular noun. Consider, carefully, its connexion with that noun before you allow it to stand.

Punctuation

THERE will always be a few writers who do not have to pay too much attention to punctuation. Their work being in such demand, editors will not mind punctuating it for them. Unfortunately many beginners imagine that they belong to this privileged class. Accordingly, they submit articles which are either abominably punctuated, or not even punctuated at all!

It will pay us to stop here for a minute, and consider the main rules which govern punctuation.

The full stop, colon and semicolon are used for the same purpose: namely, to separate portions of connected writing. Consider, for example, the following: "The clock struck twelve as he reached for the handle a shot rang out." Obviously, something is wrong here. The meaning is not clear. Introduce a full stop after

twelve, however, and we understand exactly what the writer is trying to tell us.

The full stop and semicolon are closely related. In all cases where a semicolon is used a full stop could have been used, if preferred. It should be remembered, however, that a full stop makes two separate statements stand out distinctly; whereas a semicolon has the effect of linking them closely together. Thus the choice between the two often depends upon the shade of meaning desired.

The colon is always used when one statement formally introduces a second statement. *Example:* There is only one thing left to do: I must return.

A comma is used to separate parts of a sentence which, if no point were used, would be liable to misunderstanding. Consider, for instance, the following: "Seeing the men eating a woman the daughter of one of them went for some wine." Commas are evidently needed somewhere. Introduce them as follows, and the sentence is readily understood. "Seeing the men eating, a woman, the daughter of one of them, went for some wine."

When two or more adjectives are used to precede a noun, and are not joined by conjunctions, they should be separated by commas; but only if they are closely connected in meaning. If they are not closely connected, no commas are necessary. The following are closely connected, and therefore require commas: A strong, healthy girl. A round, smooth surface. These are *not* closely connected and therefore do *not* require commas: A rich young nephew. A large grey mare.

Two parts of a sentence, if joined of the one by

common conjunctions—but, and, or, for, nor or neither—should be separated by a comma. *Example:* The train moved slowly from the station, and the passengers took their seats.

Introductory phrases, used at the beginning of sentences, should be followed by a comma. *Example:* Although he was wet to the skin, he decided to go on.

Words like however, besides, therefore, &c., when coming at the beginning of sentences, should be followed by a comma. *Example:* However, you do as you please.

A short phrase of thinking, saying, &c., coming at the end of a sentence, should be preceded by a comma. *Example:* You are right, I think.

A phrase of interrogation, coming at the end of a sentence is always preceded by a comma. *Example:* That is correct, isn't it?

A quotation which is introduced by a verb of saying or thinking should be preceded by a comma. *Example:* He said, "I will."

Be careful not to use a comma when a full stop is obviously the only point which should be used. It is not correct, for instance, to write: "I ran to the station, it was too late to catch the train, but I knew the exercise would do me good." The part preceding the first comma is one distinct sentence; that following it is another. To be correct, therefore, we must write: "I ran to the station. It was too late to catch the train, but I knew the exercise would do me good."

Dashes and brackets are used to mark off phrases which, although forming part of a sentence, are not an essential part. For example: He attempted to

start the car for the purpose—as he afterwards confided to me—of seeing if the self-starter worked. If preferred, brackets could be used instead of the dashes. Thus: He attempted to start the car for the purpose (as he afterwards confided to me) of seeing if the self-starter worked.

Expressions introduced by “especially” and not preceded by a conjunction are generally preceded by a dash. *Example:* He likes fruit—especially apples.

A part of a sentence which is prepared for by a preceding phrase is preceded by a dash. *Example:* I am anxious to interview one person—the news editor.

Expressions introduced by such words as “namely”, “for instance” and “for example”, if coming in the middle of sentences, should be preceded and followed by a dash. *Example:* They tried many ways—for instance, towing—before they could get the car to start.

Interrogative expressions coming in the middle of sentences should be preceded and followed by a dash. *Example:* We are—are we not?—all members.

A dash is often used for effect. *Example:* And after all this worry we get—what?

Writing Letters

THERE is wide scope, these days, for interesting letters. Several editors invite their readers to send them and pay well for all that are published. I know two free-lance writers who, for many months,

have made good spare-time incomes from the study of these letter opportunities alone.

Some editors set a different subject each week; others welcome letters on any subject. In many cases a length limit is fixed—usually 100 to 120 words—but whether a limit is set or not it is always advisable to be as brief as possible.

It is worth noting, in passing, that letter-writing is good practice and the beginner will be doing himself no harm by sending occasional letters to the columns of newspapers and magazines which do not pay for them, as well as to those which do. You can never tell where such letters will lead. Bernard Shaw first attracted attention in this way and Sir John Leng got a job as a reporter, and then as sub-editor, as a direct result of sending letters to the *Hull Advertiser*. One of my friends was asked to take over the sports columns of a provincial newspaper simply because he had sent frequent letters to the paper regarding the local football team.

Here is one of my own published letters which will serve to show the type of thing which is wanted:

“If the Chancellor cannot see his way clear to restore the penny post generally, why not give it back to competitors? The majority of these are working men and women and would appreciate a concession of this nature.

“It should be easy to arrange for all envelopes bearing the word *Comp* to go through at the penny rate. There could be no cheating since it would be obvious, from the address, whether or not the letter was being sent in connexion with a *bona fide* competition.

"Competitors must put at least a million pounds annually into the Post Office coffers by way of stamps and postal order duties. Surely they are entitled to something in the way of a bonus!"

Letter opportunities are constantly changing, and if I were to give a list, at the time of writing, it would probably be very much out of date by the time this book is published. I do feel safe, however, in mentioning *John Bull*, *Pearson's Weekly*, and *Country Life*. These magazines have been publishing letters for years, and there appears no reason why the editors should alter this policy in the near future.

Letters for *Country Life* stand a better chance if accompanied by suitable illustrations. Several of the Church monthlies also welcome illustrated letters.

Payment for letters published is never lower than five shillings and sometimes is as much as two guineas. It will be seen, therefore, that this branch of writing is a lucrative one.

It must not be thought, because letters are short and the openings for them are so many, that you can sit down and dash off a hundred words in a few minutes. If they are to sell, letters must be carefully planned and written around a strong idea. *It is the idea which counts.*

When a set subject is announced—as is often the case—try to view it from an original viewpoint. Yours will not be the only entry received. The editor will probably receive hundreds, from which he has to select no more than a dozen. It stands to reason that those entries which will appeal to him most will be those which contain original ideas—ideas which are far removed from the obvious.

When there is no set subject take for your theme a subject which has a wide general appeal, or which has a strong topical interest. The more readers your letter is likely to interest, the greater will be the chance of acceptance.

Every word in a letter must pull its weight. There is no room for soliloquizing. Present your idea, or give your facts, in short convincing sentences.

Many letter features are run like competitions. There are certain rules to observe and these should be studied carefully before a contribution is sent in. Pay particular attention to the word limit, and to any instructions with regard to addressing the envelope.

There is no better way of keeping in touch with openings for letters than by subscribing to the *Free-Lance Weekly*, a four-page duplicated market list published by Mr. S. S. Harris of 30 Grafton Street, London, E.1. (Incidentally, this was one of my own ideas. I commenced to publish it in 1930, since when it has appeared every Saturday without a break.)

Where to get Ideas

BEFORE you begin to write an article you must have an *idea*. An idea is the first requisite to successful writing. You haven't any? Well, get one! How? I will try and show you.

In the first place, think of yourself. Interview yourself. What are your interests? What people have you known? What trips have you taken? What exciting things have happened to you? What are your hobbies? Dozens of ideas will spring from your answers to these

questions and the more you think about them the more you will discover in the way of ideas.

Hobbies are a great source of inspiration, and since most are catered for by magazines confined exclusively to matter relating to them, the possible field for articles is a wide one. Magazines which fall into this class are *Amateur Photographer*, *Home Photographer*, *Kodak Magazine*, *Chess*, *Stamp Review*, *Stamp Collecting*, *Stamp Magazine*, *Cigarette Card News*, *Cage Birds*, *Bird Fancy*, *Our Dogs*, *Cycling*, *Rover World*, *Scout*, *Guide*, *Popular Flying*, *Amateur Gardening*, *Home Gardening*, *Good Gardening*, and so on. If you have taken a genuine interest in any of the hobbies covered by these papers you should be able to write at least a few short articles around experiences connected with them.

Articles on hobbies need not be confined, however, to the hobby press. Openings exist in all the national and leading provincial newspapers, as well as in juvenile magazines and annuals, and many of the domestic weeklies. It is possible, for instance, to sell articles on photography to almost any newspaper or magazine; and stamp articles sometimes crop up in the most unlikely places.

A few magazines cater for hobbies in general. In this respect I am thinking of papers like *Hobbies Weekly*, *Meccano Magazine*, *Exchange and Mart*, and so on.

Some hobbies have not a wide enough interest, or do not carry sufficient advertising possibilities, to make the publication of a magazine of their own a commercial proposition. Articles dealing with such

hobbies, however, frequently find their way into the pages of suitable magazines. *Wood Painting, Metal Work, Collecting, Rug-Making, Book-Binding, and Barbola Work* are examples.

Examine your hobbies from all possible angles. If you collect coins, for instance, you need not confine your writing to articles about the actual collection of them, the groups into which they fall, and so on. Quite an interesting article could be written about the different metals they contain, another about their shapes, and a third about the inscriptions on them.

One of my own hobbies is stamp-collecting; and while writing this book I am busy collecting material for another, dealing with stamps, which I shall entitle, *Stamps with a Story*.

It is easy to turn from hobbies to games. Here, again, endless opportunities exist and there are scores of papers which cater for national sports. *Golf Illustrated, Horse and Hound, Polo Monthly, Angler's News, Boxing, Cricketer, Tennis Illustrated and Rackets Review, Billiard Player, Game & Gun & the Angler's Monthly, Swimming, and Racing and Football Outlook* are a few. As with hobbies, however, the writer need not confine his articles on sports to these magazines. He may tackle the London and provincial newspapers, as well as many weekly and monthly magazines of a general nature. *Field, Country Life, and Scottish Country Life* are worth special consideration in this respect.

Unless you are a first-class player, or well known in connexion with any particular game, do not write articles on how to *play*. Editors will not be a bit interested in them if you do. The only exception is when

writing for juvenile markets; *then* you may try your hand at instructional articles.

Instead, approach the game from a new angle. As an example let us consider tennis for a moment and see how this game might be approached. What is tennis played with? A racket and a ball. Very well, why not an article describing how tennis balls are made, and another how rackets are made? Well illustrated, both these articles should sell easily. And what about choosing a racket? There are surely several useful hints, regarding this, which could be passed on to beginners.

When was tennis first played? Have the rules changed much? Is it played differently in any countries abroad? How did the players of the last generation differ from the players of this? (A chat with your grandmother is indicated here!)

Editors of the feminine weeklies will be glad to consider articles on clothes for tennis. Are shorts for lady players unsightly? (I say "Yes"; but you may differ!)

How does one set about forming a tennis club? What are the officers of a tennis club expected to do? How are tournaments arranged? These are all subjects worth writing up, and they do not by any means exhaust the possibilities.

Let us now turn from ourselves and our own interests to other people and their interests. It is said that every person can tell at least one good story. Endeavour, then, to get a story from every person you meet. This is not as difficult as it may seem if you bear in mind the fact that the story is likely to be connected with the person's chief interests.

Take, for example, a gamekeeper. Two or three chats with one of these worthies will provide material for a dozen articles. His work alone is interesting, but is seldom written about. Apart from his actual work, however, consider his knowledge of wild animal life. Hundreds of newspapers and magazines are interested in articles on this subject. He will probably never write a single article himself, but, if approached in a courteous manner, he will be glad to relate the more interesting of his experiences to an open-eared free-lance writer. He may also be able to suggest numerous photographic studies, few of which the free-lance would stumble across in the ordinary way.

You may think I have mentioned a gamekeeper because he provides a particularly good example. Not a bit of it. The postman who drops your letters through the door, or the dustman who collects your refuse, are just as suitable. The great thing is to get them talking about something which interests them—and then leave them to ramble on.

Listen-in to your friends' conversations—particularly when they are arguing. There is no better way of picking up ideas for psychological articles. Encourage your friends to argue. In this way you will get to know what they are *thinking*—and their thoughts, translated into articles, will readily become saleable.

A third source of ideas is the newspaper. Many writers find that this source alone is sufficient to keep them working at full pressure, without searching for ideas in any other direction.

When I have finished reading my morning paper in the ordinary way, I go through it again looking for

ideas. I do the same with nearly every magazine I read. I make a note of every paragraph which suggests an idea and commence to follow up any which seem to offer immediate possibilities.

A few days ago I read a paragraph in the *Daily Express* which related an interesting microphone experience, connected with D. A. Clarke-Smith. It occurred during the broadcasting of a play called *Azeff*. He had the last few minutes of the play entirely to himself. Just before, Robert Speaight, who was also in the cast, was supposed to be packing suitcases to go away. To lend effect, D. A. Clarke-Smith gave him a hand. They shoved everything within sight into those cases, banged down the lids and snapped the locks. Then D. A. Clarke-Smith turned to the microphone to speak his last lines—and found he hadn't the script! He had packed it in one of the suitcases and didn't know which one!

As I read this I thought, "No doubt many others have had similar experiences in front of the microphone. If I could collect a dozen or so I could make a decent feature of them. So I set to work and got ten more stories, put them together under the general title *Was My Face Red?* and sold them to *Radio Pictorial*. The feature filled two complete pages of this magazine and a nice-sized cheque followed.

It would be possible for me to give hundreds of illustrations like this, but this one is sufficient to show how a newspaper can suggest an idea, and how the idea can be written up and turned into cash. (Which is, I presume, what every reader of this book is after!)

The correspondence columns of newspapers are always

worth a careful study. Many of the letters published contain ideas for articles and additional facts can often be obtained by writing direct to addresses given at the foot of them. I would also mention, in passing, that correspondence columns sometimes afford a handy means of obtaining information. More than once, when I have wanted certain facts to complete an article, I have written to one of the national newspapers and within an issue or two some reader has satisfied my needs.

Some time ago I read an article (it was published, I think, in the *Writer*) which dealt with methods of *creating ideas*. I have never found it necessary to experiment with any of these methods myself, but they struck me, at the time, as being promising ones.

One of these, I remember, was to write down a number of stock "forms" of titles and to juggle with them until a suitable subject suggested itself. Here are some suggested forms: "How to —"; "— something to —"; "Too many —"; "Choosing a —". Having made a list the method consists in replacing the blanks by suitable verbs or nouns. Thus we might get "How to Reseat a Chair"; "Teaching a Puppy to Eat"; "Too Many Holidays"; and "Choosing a Maid". Any of these subjects would make a saleable article.

Ideas beget ideas. Let me give you an example. A short time ago I had a cold. (Nothing original about *that*!) My throat was sore and I was given certain home-made drinks to relieve the irritation. Splendid! They worked! So I thought, "What is good for me may be good for others. Why not an article on *Drinks*

that Comfort Colds”? I set to work on the idea and within a few days had sold the article to the Home Page editor of the *Daily Express*.

I did not finish there, however. Toying further with the idea, I thought, “Why not an article on home-made drinks? Or, better still, home-made wines?” Properly written, and submitted at the right time, this will certainly sell to the editor of a home page.

Wines led me to think of grapes. There must be an interesting story connected with the harvesting of grapes. I have never seen an article on it and I have made up my mind to find out where, and when, this takes place on a large scale. If I am able to get hold of some suitable illustrations I may quite easily be able to prepare and sell two or three different articles on this subject.

And what of grapes? “Can they,” I thought, “be used for any other purpose than for dessert and the making of wine? Can they be used in connexion with cooking, for instance? I must jot this idea on my list and endeavour to find out. If I have time to spare I may be able to carry out a few experiments. I have never seen an article on this subject. Maybe, then, I can get sufficient material for three or four.”

Do you see now how easy it is to find subjects, once you let your mind run in the right channels? I think you do.

Collecting Material

ONCE you have hit upon an idea for an article worth writing up, the next thing is to look around for suitable material with which to fill the article. Let us see how this is done.

Consider a simple illustration.

You have sent someone a cheque and have omitted to sign your name. In due course the cheque comes back to you with the request that you add your signature. "Very foolish of me," you think and in a second or two you get an idea for an article—*Cheque Book Lore*.

Take a large sheet of paper and jot the idea down. Underneath make a note of your own experience. This is a start, but it does not amount to very much. Where, then, are you going to find more material?

You think first of your cheque book. This contains a page of suggestions and you may be able to take one or two points from this.

Next you turn to your cuttings. Ah! here are one or two useful clippings. You pick out the main points from each and add them to your skeleton article, which is now quickly taking shape on the idea sheet.

You think the idea a good one and therefore do not mind sending a shilling or so to a Cutting Agency for further cuttings on the subject. A study of these will provide you with more facts.

A visit to the Public Library may result in your finding a book containing references to the subject. If you are lucky in this respect you are certain to

find in the book a number of additional and useful facts.

Perhaps, by this time, one or two questions have cropped up in your mind the answers to which are not to be found in any of the cuttings or books you have so far examined. How long does it take for a cheque to get back into your account? If, for instance, you post one on Monday and the person who receives it banks it on Tuesday, when is it likely to get back to your bank and cause a debit in your account? Next time you go to the bank, ask the cashier. Do it tactfully and maybe you will pick up some more interesting information as well.

Your idea sheet is now fairly full, and having sorted out your facts and arranged them in a suitable order you can set about writing the article.

We have discovered, in the above example, some five or six ways in which information may be obtained. Let us summarize these ways and keep them by us for reference.

Information, then, may be obtained as follows:

1. *From personal experience.* You probably know *something* about almost *every* subject. Facts may not crowd into your mind immediately, but if you think hard for a minute or two you will recall some incident, or remember some fact, in keeping with your subject. Do not be afraid to think; and to think *hard*.

2. *From cuttings.* Every writer should have a collection of newspaper and magazine cuttings of his own. Snip out every article or paragraph you consider interesting, add the date and name of paper, and file away for convenient reference. Three or four good

cuttings, on one particular subject, may give you sufficient facts—without additional help—for a new and saleable article. (In a later section I shall show how to collect cuttings, and describe a method of filing them.)

3. *From borrowed cuttings.* There are now two well-established firms which make a business of hiring out cuttings, on any subject, for a small fee. I have used the services of both these firms on several occasions and do not hesitate to acknowledge my indebtedness to them. Their addresses are as follows:

Personal Press Cuttings Service,
Cuzco,
Periton,
Minehead. Somerset.

and

Hannaford's Press Cuttings,
46 Lammas Avenue,
Mitcham. Surrey.

4. *From reference books.* If you have access to a public library you can obtain information, on almost any subject, from some of the books to be found in it. Librarians are invariably courteous and willing to give careful attention to any genuine inquiry. They will answer queries by telephone and also send information by post.

It is my belief that the average writer does not make half as much use of the public library as he might. Yet its shelves are teeming with ideas and material for countless articles. If space permitted I could

mention scores of examples in support of this. Here is just one. A short time ago I came across a book on *Deserted and Forsaken Churches*. Since it was over thirty years old I first verified the facts contained in it, and then set out to visit some of the places mentioned and get suitable photographs of them. As a result I have since written three articles on the subject and have sufficient facts for at least two more.

5. *From asking questions.* Do not be afraid to go to anyone whom you think may be able to supply you with the facts you need. If you are writing an article about the Post Office, knock up a conversation with a postman; if it concerns fish, make friends with an angler; and so on. By doing this you will probably find that you will get more than sufficient facts for the article you have in mind. You may even get enough for a second, or perhaps a third.

A writer should never forget the other fellow. Get into conversation with as many people as you can. Tap the other person's mind. Drag from him as many interesting facts as you can and you will never lack a subject.

Collecting Press Cuttings

A PRACTICE which is undoubtedly of great value to the free-lance is that of collecting press cuttings. The ways in which these cuttings may be used are many and the average free-lance will find that, as his collection grows, so will his output.

In the first place, cuttings are invaluable when it comes to topical articles. As witness an example.

Some time ago the leading newspapers published stories to the effect that the *Cobenhaven* (a lost Danish training ship) had been sighted off Tristan da Cunha, that her helm was unmanned and that, apparently, there was not a soul on board. It was, in fact, a mystery ship, and it seemed that an article dealing with similar mystery ships would, on account of its topicality, prove welcome to a London editor. Accordingly, I hunted up a batch of cuttings on "Ocean Mysteries" and immediately prepared a short article entitled, *Ghost Ships of Many Seas*. Within two days it appeared in a London newspaper.

If the cuttings had not been to hand it would have been impossible to have prepared and submitted this article while the subject was still topical.

Cuttings are useful also for supplying the necessary material for anniversary articles. I refer here, of course, to annual events like New Year, Shrove Tuesday, Grand National, Boat Race, Ascot, Budget, Easter, and so on. These are all subjects which can be written up year after year, and the cuttings which are collected on each give one ideas for an almost limitless number of articles. I know of more than one colleague who has found it possible to devote the whole of his time to the writing of articles on these annual events.

Cuttings are useful, too, for providing inspiration for articles when otherwise inspiration seems dead. Many a time, in my early days, I was lost for a subject. I had only to glance through a few batches of cuttings, however, and a dozen or more workable ideas presented themselves to me. It is not wise, of course, to use again the principal idea which any one cutting contains

(unless you approach it from an entirely different angle), for this, surely, is a form of plagiarism.

It is generally possible to pick out one or two interesting facts from each of a number of cuttings and to put these together in the form of an entirely original manuscript which has no resemblance at all to any of the other articles from which the facts have been taken. I have resorted to this practice myself on innumerable occasions and the results have been so successful that I do not hesitate to pass the idea on.

If you decide to make a speciality of one or two particular subjects—and in another section of this book I strongly advise you to do this—a good collection of cuttings is absolutely essential if you are to be really successful. It is surprising how quickly you can build up a strong selection, on one particular subject, when you set your mind to the task. And it need hardly be added that all the time you are building up your collection you are getting a more thorough grounding in your subject and are frequently discovering suitable ideas for articles.

Having discovered some of the uses to which cuttings may be put, it will be interesting now to consider how they are obtained and how they may best be classified.

First of all, then, where to obtain them.

I do not buy many magazines regularly for the sole purpose of cutting. I have found, however, that *Answers*, *Tit-Bits*, and *Pearson's Weekly* are usually rich in suitable cuttings, and hardly a week passes, therefore, without these three publications coming to the notice of my scissors. My daily papers (I always

take two) also provide me with regular clippings.

Whenever opportunity presents itself I visit auction sales or second-hand bookshops and look about for magazines suitable for cutting. A few weeks before writing this book I picked up twenty-eight volumes of the *Strand Magazine*, dated round about 1900, for the modest sum of two shillings. From these I got over 100 first-class cuttings, and within a week one of them alone helped me to earn a fee of £3, 18s. 9d. for an article which appeared in the *Book Window*.

I have found, too, that one can pick up many useful cuttings at the expense of one's friends. Get to know what newspapers and periodicals your friends take regularly. If any of them are different from those you take yourself ask if you may collect copies when they have finished with them.

Then there is the local library to consider. On inquiry you will find that used newspapers and magazines can be purchased cheaply.

The advertisement columns of *Exchange and Mart* are worth watching. It is often possible to pick up quantities of old magazines in this way.

And now a word about classifying cuttings.

When I first began to collect I made a number of folders from ordinary brown paper—as strong as I could get it—and as cuttings were obtained they were placed in the folders which bore titles most applicable to their subject-matter. It will be understood that this classifying was quite a crude arrangement, but I felt that, until I had a fair collection, it was as good as any.

The titles of the various folders, as near as I can remember them now, were Anniversaries, Natural

History, Stage and Cinema, Religion, Celebrities, Unusual Experiences, History, Geography, Science, Art, Literature, Domestic, Law, Handicrafts, Customs, Political and Miscellaneous.

As soon as a folder became uncomfortably full I divided the cuttings again, this time into foolscap envelopes. Thus Natural History was divided into Ants, Dogs, Elephants, Grouse, Mice, Rabbits, and so on. As time went on all the folders became full and I now have some thousands of foolscap envelopes containing cuttings on as many subjects. These envelopes are arranged in alphabetical order and I am able to find information on any subject within a minute or two.

A few of the subjects, selected from my collection at random, may be of interest. Here, then, are a few: *Air Mails, Antipathies, Basket Making, Bibles, Careers for Boys, Chiropody, Corks, Dew Ponds, Duels, Entertaining with Table Napkins, Foolhardy Feats, Giants and Dwarfs, Handwriting, Horse Brasses, Icebergs, Jest-Books, Keeping Cool, Lightning, London Oddities, Marbles, Miniatures, Newspapers, Noses, Olive Harvests, Pacifism, Peat, Queen Elizabeth, Refrigerators, Rings, Safe Deposits, Seaweed, Teasels, Unclaimed Fortunes, Valentine Day, Wassailing, Yom Kippur, and Zebras.*

It will be seen from these examples that the range of subjects covered is a very wide one. It is, because I collect cuttings *on every subject I possibly can*. It pays *me* to do so—and it will pay *you*.

Sources of Information

THERE are countless organizations willing to help free-lance writers in the preparation of articles and news stories. At different times I have made use of several of these, and I recall numerous articles which would never have been written but for their kindly aid.

To give particulars of all these organizations would fill a small book. Here, however, is a list of the most useful.

The Public Relations Department of the B.B.C., Broadcasting House, W.1, will furnish facts relating to all matters connected with broadcasting. Further facts may be obtained from the Radio Manufacturers' Association, 310 Regent Street, W.1. For television copy apply to the Television Society, 25 Lisburn Road, N.W.3.

Matters relating to any of the Colonies should be referred to the Colonial Office, Downing Street, S.W.1; and to foreign countries to the Embassies concerned. The addresses of these Embassies can be obtained from a London Post Office Directory.

For motoring subjects try the A.A. Press Bureau, Fanum House, New Coventry Street, London, or the Press Officer, R.A.C., Pall Mall, S.W.1.

The permanent Under-Secretary for War, if addressed at the War Office, Whitehall, will furnish information relating to His Majesty's Forces. Admiralty news is obtainable from the Admiralty, Whitehall.

Almost any information, within reason, about the Church of England may be obtained from the Press

and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, Church House, Westminster.

Any of the railway companies will supply information about their services. Address letters to the London terminus of each company.

Information regarding electrical appliances may be obtained from the British Electrical Development Association Inc., 15 Savoy Street, Strand, W.C.2., or Electric Lamp Manufacturers' Association, 2 Savoy Hill, W.C.2.

For Tote information write to the Publicity Manager, Tote Investors, Ltd., 16-17 New Bridge Street, E.C.4., or the Racecourse Betting Control Board, 67 Jermyn Street, S.W.1. Facts about pony racing are gladly given by the Press Officer of Northolt Park, Ltd., 20 St. James's Square, S.W.1.

The General Post Office Press Office is at St. Martin's-le-Grand, E.C.1, and the Press Officer in charge will supply any information relating to Post Office matters.

For anything connected with Astronomy try the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, London, S.E.10.

The Press Bureau maintained by the Federation of British Industries at 21 Tothill Street, S.W.1, is a sound source of information relating to Britain's industrial activities.

Cyclists' interests are looked after by the Cyclists' Touring Club, 3 Craven Hill, W.2, and the National Cyclists' Union, 35 Doughty Street, W.C.1. The British Cycle and Motor Cycle Manufacturers' and Traders' Union, Ltd., The Towers, Warwick Road, Coventry, supplies matter of trade interest.

The Ministry of Transport has a Press office at White-

hall Gardens, and information may be obtained regarding road, rail, and canal transport.

British Commercial Gas Association, 28 Grosvenor Gardens, S.W.1, gives information relating to gas in all its uses.

Camping and caravanning interests are covered by the Camping Club of Great Britain and Ireland, 38 Grosvenor Gardens, S.W.1.

Rambling is mainly covered by the Ramblers' Association, 7 Buckingham Palace Gardens, S.W.1.

Facts about winter sports are obtainable from Scottish Travel Association, 37 George Street, Edinburgh; Alpine Ski Club, 3 Pitt Street, W.8; Scottish Ski Club, 162 Buchanan Street, Glasgow, C.1; British Ice Hockey Association, Piccadilly House, Jermyn Street, S.W.1; and the National Skating Association of Great Britain, 11 Victoria Street, S.W.1.

The best source of information for matter relating to the preservation of the Countryside is the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, 4 Hobart Place, S.W.1.

The Iron and Steel Institute, 28 Victoria Street, S.W.1, is willing to help with all technical matters relating to the manufacture of iron and steel.

For aviation facts and figures write to the Press Department of Imperial Airways, Airways Terminus, Victoria Station, S.W.1, or the Society of British Aircraft Constructors, 1 Albemarle Street, W.1.

The addresses of the main shipping lines are: Canadian Pacific, 62-65 Charing Cross, S.W.1; Cunard-White Star Line, Cunard Buildings, Liverpool, 3; and The Union-Castle Mail Steamship Lines, 3 Fenchurch

Street, E.C.3. Information relating to shipping may be obtained from any of these.

The London Transport Press Bureau, 55 Broadway, Westminster, supplies information relating to the Underground, Buses, Coaches, Tramways, and Trolley-buses of London.

Canoeing is covered by the Royal Canoe Club, Trowlock Island, Teddington, and the British Canoe Association, 38 Grosvenor Gardens, S.W.2.

Matters covered by the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education are dealt with by the Division of Intelligence and Public Relations, Ministry of Health, Whitehall, S.W.1.

For facts connected with building try the Building Centre, 158 New Bond Street, W.1.

Skeleton Outlines

WE come now to a study of the way in which a saleable article is built up. Obviously, this is one of the most important sections of the book.

It is not too much to say that many would-be writers fail to get into print because they do not present their facts in proper order.

The best way I know of overcoming this is to draw up a skeleton outline of each article before attempting to write it up. You will find this a first-rate exercise, and after a few attempts you will probably discover you can do away with your paper outline; your facts marshal themselves, in their proper order, in your subconscious mind. Until this happens, however, stick to the skeleton outline.

For all practical purposes an article may be said to have three parts—the OPENING, the main facts forming the BODY, and the ENDING.

For the OPENING try to get something topical or arresting; for the BODY obtain a number of striking and little-known facts; and for the ENDING find a fact which, in some way, is a little more striking than the rest. (I shall deal with the Opening and Ending more fully in the next section.)

Now let us consider an example.

The following article is one which I had published some time ago in *Everybody's Weekly*. I did not actually draw up a skeleton outline before writing this, but the facts arranged themselves in my mind, in proper order, subconsciously.

Here is the article:

WHERE DIVORCE IS EASY

Reports which have recently appeared in the daily press, regarding divorce proceedings in Chicago and Hollywood, have led many to believe that the United States is the country where divorce is most easily and frequently obtained.

This is not so. The American cannot so carelessly dismiss his wife, as can, for example the Turkoman. In Turkey, a husband has only to order his wife out of the house to show her that she must seek an asylum elsewhere.

The wife of a Chinaman is never wise in telling her husband exactly what she thinks of him—unless it is that she is really tired of him—for the Chinese law

permits a man to rid himself of his partner if she proves too talkative! He may also separate himself from her if there is mutual dislike, incompatibility of temperament, or jealousy.

In Siberia, a man who becomes dissatisfied with his helpmate, and wishes to see the last of her, has only to tear the veil from the woman's head and she at once ceases to be his spouse. She has no further claim upon him, and he is at liberty to wed again.

Some of the American Indians dissolve their marriage by the breaking of certain sticks which are given to witnesses at the time of the marriage. To render the marriage void they have only to be broken in public.

A somewhat similar custom prevails in Cochin China. In that country an ill-assorted pair may separate legally simply by breaking a couple of chopsticks in the presence of two or three people.

Among the Siamese the first wife may be divorced, but she may not be sold. Future wives may. The first wife also has the privilege of taking away with her the eldest child, but all other children remain the sole property of the father.

In contrast to these rather free and easy countries, there are others where divorce is almost unknown. Greece, Spain and Austria are among the most important.

Divorce is granted in Tibet, but the law there asserts that both parties must consent, and under no circumstances is either divorcee allowed to wed again.

In England divorce is naturally a very difficult and complicated affair, but a belief was once persistent, in the minds of Englishmen, that a husband was at

liberty to sell his wife. Such sales have been effected in public market places within living memory.

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Now let us see how a skeleton outline, of the subject-matter contained in this article, would have been prepared:

Opening.—Divorces seem easy to obtain in America—we, in England, think this extraordinary—in many foreign countries, however, divorces may be obtained with even less trouble.

Fact 1.—Divorce in Turkey (Turkoman orders the wife out).

Fact 2.—Divorce in China (Chinaman can divorce talkative wife).

Fact 3.—Divorce in Siberia (husband has only to tear the veil).

Fact 4.—Divorce among American Indians (breaking sticks).

Fact 5.—Divorce in Cochin China (breaking chopsticks).

Fact 6.—Divorce in Siam (second wives may be sold).

Fact 7.—Countries where divorce is almost unknown.

Fact 8.—Divorce in Tibet (laws very harsh).

Ending.—Divorce in England—Englishmen have sold their wives within living memory.

Here are some points about this outline I would like you to observe.

The Opening, although not being what is called a "hot topical" definitely has a topical interest. It arrests the attention because it contradicts a belief held by the majority of people. Few know it is possible to obtain divorces more easily than in America.

Fact 1 follows after the introduction because it concerns one of the easiest divorces known. Notice how it is linked with the introduction.

Facts 2 and 3 could be put in either order. They are

not linked up with anything. They are merely facts, relative to the subject, which help to form the body.

Facts 4 and 5 are the same except that they are definitely linked together—owing to the breaking of sticks in each case. It would be unwise to separate them. Notice how the phrase “A somewhat similar custom ”, links them up.

When we get to Fact 5 we have finished with the really easy divorces. Facts 6 and 7 concern those which are rather more complicated. It is right, therefore, that they should come together, and apart from the rest.

The Ending brings us back home and gives a startling fact about our own countrymen—within living memory wives have been sold in public market places.

Before you sit down to write another article, draw up a skeleton outline similar to the above example. You will be surprised how much easier it will be to write the article, and how much better it will read when you have written it.

First and Last Paragraphs

YOU cannot pay too much attention to the opening paragraphs of your articles; and you must never forget that it is the duty of the last paragraph to round an article off so that it ends naturally and smoothly.

Let me give you some examples of good openings. Here are five:

1. "Although you cannot possibly control the amount of dust that comes into your house, you can control, to a certain extent, the place where it collects."

(Article entitled: *Dust on the Walls.*)

2. "A building that, when completed, will be one of the wonders of the world is being built on a mountain side in America."

(Article entitled: *House that Cannot be Destroyed.*)

3. "Many an insect which has stayed out too late, has been waylaid, robbed and destroyed by bandits on the look-out for unwary travellers. Their methods of stopping this prey are many and varied, and some of them forestalled man in the use of bombs, gas and shooting."

(Article entitled: *The Beetle Bandits.*)

4. "It is often urged by childless people that children are sure to come between husband and wife and upset a happy and smoothly working household."

(Article entitled: *Quarrels Over the Children.*)

5. "Many and varied are the stains and marks that find their way on to the goods and chattels of the average household. Fortunately the majority of them can be removed or at least rendered much less conspicuous, if treated in the right way. Here is a selection of the most common stains and a few methods of treatment."

(Article entitled: *Treating Stains.*)

There are two important points to notice about each of these openings. They are these: (1) Each is *arresting*; (2) each *introduces the subject* straight away. No opening is good unless it embraces both these points. An editor is often *compelled* to read an article because the first few lines arouse his curiosity. If he fails to find anything interesting in the first paragraph he may be

tempted not to read any further. This will mean rejection.

It is a common fault to leave the introduction of a subject until the second or third paragraph. Do not let this fault be yours. It is very desirable, when you have to cram your facts into a few hundred words, to get right into the subject as quickly as possible.

So much for the opening.

The ending, I have said, must be natural and smooth. The aim should be to give the impression that you have said all there is to say about your subject and that, really, there is nothing more that *can* be said. Many of the manuscripts I have been asked to criticize have ended just where they were beginning to get interesting. This is a bad fault—but a very common one.

Pay special attention to the style of your ending. Coax it to leave an impression on the mind like that left by a favourite sweetmeat on the tongue.

Titles.

A LONDON magazine editor said to me once: "Ninety per cent of the manuscripts that pass through my hands bear titles that beg for an immediate rejection slip." Another told me: "I never look beyond the title and the first paragraph if these fail to interest me."

So, you see, titles are almost as important as the articles themselves.

It is too much to say that a first-class title will sell a poor article, but it is not too much to say that a

fairly good article will sometimes be rejected on account of a clumsy title. Many papers stand or fall by the titles of their articles. The more these attract, the greater the circulation. Editors know this and pay great attention to titles in consequence.

Film companies assess the value of titles very highly. Some time ago an author sent to one of the leading American companies a story bearing the title *The Merry Wives of Reno*. The company found the story unsuitable, but the title was very much to their liking, and for this alone they paid the lucky author over a thousand pounds!

What *is* a good title? I would define it this way. A good title is a *few* words, put together in an *original* form, giving a *fair indication* of the contents of an article.

Notice particularly the words in italics. They are the important parts of the definition. There should be brevity, originality and aptness.

In the light of this definition consider these examples. They are titles which have appeared above my own articles, at one time or another.

Film Laughs are no Joke.

Do You Need a Baby's Love?

Stars Hitched to a Waggon. .

The first had to do with the cost of film comedies in terms of cash and human suffering; the second with child adoption; and the third with the caravan experiences of well-known stage and screen stars. The articles appeared in *Film Weekly*, *Daily Express*, and *Home Notes* respectively.

If you examine each of these titles carefully, I think you will agree that each is original and that it gives a fair indication of the contents of the article for which it forms the label.

None of these titles was thought out in a couple of minutes. I often spend as much time evolving a title as in writing the article itself. But I am convinced that it pays.

The average beginner would have given these particular articles titles like the following:

What Film Laughs Cost.

How to Adopt a Baby.

Stars and Their Caravans.

Do you not see how commonplace such titles are? There is nothing in them which *attracts*. They certainly give an indication of contents, but that is as much as you can say. If anything, they give too great an indication. This is not wise. Good titles withhold just sufficient to pique the reader's appetite.

When you find it difficult to evolve a good title seek the aid of alliteration. Writers of novels frequently resort to this device, and if you think for a moment you will remember scores of such titles—*Nicholas Nickleby*, *Rob Roy*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Count of Monte Cristo*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Woman in White*, to mention but a few.

An excellent example of an alliterative title has caught my eye since I have been writing this section. It appears in *John Bull*, over an article dealing with the increasing use of films in schools, and reads: *Wonder of the White Blackboard*. In addition to the alliteration

a clever twist has been given to the words *white* and *black*, and the title is thus an excellent one.

Whenever possible avoid the use of *the* at the beginning of a title. Not only is it clumsy; usually it is unnecessary.

Much of the advice I have given concerning titles for articles applies to titles for photographs. Prints sell far more readily when accompanied by apt and original captions. Most readers have doubtless seen that well-known picture of a number of baby sparrows perched on a twig, taken by Mr. Rufus H. Mallinson. One of the youngsters has missed his footing and is hanging on by one foot only. Many would have submitted this picture with an ordinary title like *Young Sparrows* or *Their First Outing*. Not so Mr. Mallinson. He realized at once that the unfortunate member of the family was the real point of interest and captioned the picture: *Look, boys, one hand!*

Often, of course, one does not need an original title for a photograph. Many prints call for straightforward captions telling exactly what they depict. When such captions *are* called for be very careful to get your facts correct and see that you give all the details that are necessary. Make certain there are no spelling errors. Editors will not thank you if you err in this direction.

Preliminary Letters

DURING practically the whole of my free-lancing experience I have made a practice of not submitting an article until I have first paved a way for it by sending a preliminary letter. I am convinced it is

chiefly due to this that I have been able to work up a connexion with more than 100 newspapers and magazines.

Perhaps you are wondering just what a preliminary letter is. Let me give you an example.

Supposing you have in mind an article of about 1000 words, illustrated by two or three photographs, on the subject: "Deserted and Forgotten Churches." It is the type of article, you think, which would appeal to the editor of a Church magazine. The editor of *The Sign* might like to see it. Very well, do not submit the article straight away but, in the first place, send a preliminary letter worded somewhat as follows:

DEAR SIR,

I am wondering if you would care to consider an article, of about 1000 words in length, on the subject "Deserted and Forgotten Churches". I have got together a good deal of interesting matter on this subject, which I feel would prove entertaining to your readers.

Suitable illustrations would accompany the article.

Thanking you for your kind consideration, and awaiting your reply with interest,

I remain,

Yours truly,

Enclose a stamped addressed envelope with your letter and in due course you will receive a reply. If this is favourable you can prepare and submit your manuscript. With it send a short letter worded as follows:

DEAR SIR,

I have to thank you for your letter of . . . and have pleasure now in sending my article and illustrations on "Deserted and Forgotten Churches".

Trusting these will meet with your complete approval, and again thanking you for your kind consideration,

I remain,

Yours truly,

This will serve as an introduction and will ensure a careful reading of your manuscript.

Many beginners have an idea that editors do not welcome preliminary letters. Let me dispel this notion. In the whole of my experience I have found only two editors who have definitely discouraged the practice. One of these has since ceased to be an editor and the other wrote to the effect that he was "pleased to see *any* articles submitted to him". (Which might, of course, have been a gentle hint that he was not very interested in anything *I* was able to submit!)

Perhaps I have been more fortunate than other freelances who have resorted to this practice. If so, it is, I think, because I have been careful of two things: (1) not to submit hackneyed ideas; and (2) to make certain an idea is suitable for the paper to which it is sent.

I once had an article on the subject of preliminary letters published in one of the leading magazines for writers. After it had appeared a reader wrote to the editor as follows:

"Though this may be your contributor's experience

in the latter stages of his career, it is doubtful if a free-lance feeling his way would discover a preliminary letter to be helpful.

"If he writes to ascertain whether a particular article will be acceptable, the chances to-day are ten to one on his being told that the subject is already covered, that the topic is hackneyed, or that the contribution will be unacceptable for one of a dozen other reasons."

The same thought may suggest itself to some readers of this book. If it suggests itself to you—forget it! *No* editor—and note the emphasis on the "no"—will turn down a good idea because he has never heard of the writer who suggests it. On the contrary, he will be more likely to encourage such a writer. Good ideas are too scarce to be treated lightly.

The advantages of sending preliminary letters are many.

In the first place, I have found that when an editor has to turn down one idea he may be kind enough to suggest another. A good example of this occurred to me only a few months before writing this book.

I approached the editor of *Zoo* with the idea for an article dealing with the training of guide dogs for the blind. He replied to the effect that he could not ask me to prepare an article on these lines, because the subject was already partly covered in a serial story he was running. Then he went on to ask: "Could you let me have an article on Cruft's Dog Show?" I got on to this article straight away, submitted it, and within a few days had a letter with an offer of five guineas for it. The length was about 1200 words.

If I had submitted my article on guide dogs in the first place the chances are that it would have been returned with an ordinary rejection slip, and the opportunity of preparing something on Cruft's Show would not have presented itself.

It must not be overlooked that there are several reasons, other than unsuitability, which may cause a manuscript to be rejected. Seldom, however, will an editor give a reason on a rejection slip; but, when replying to a preliminary letter, he is almost compelled to state one.

It sometimes happens that he has already used an article on similar lines, or has one ready for use. For instance, I once suggested to the editor of *Territorial* an illustrated article on troops used in the making of films.

The editor replied to the effect that he had published an article on the same subject in the current issue. I might have wasted much valuable time preparing this article, and the sole reason for its rejection would have been the fact that it clashed with one in print.

Sometimes I have found that when an editor has been compelled to turn down a suggestion because he has already used something on the same subject recently, he will suggest that I approach him again in, say, six months' time and then tackle the subject from a different angle. I have sold scores of articles in this way, and I cannot think that I should have sold any of them if I had relied on rejection slips.

Again, an editor may be full up with material for some months ahead. He is not likely, however, to give this information on all the rejection slips sent out,

but he is certain to give it in reply to a preliminary letter.

Apart from very short articles, topical articles, and articles for markets I know very well, I never submit an article until an editor has expressed a willingness to consider it. If, after that, it comes back I know that the reason for rejection is entirely with myself; and if the editor has not already done so for me, in a covering letter, I immediately post mortem my manuscript in an endeavour to find out exactly why it has failed.

How to Submit

WE have now got to the stage where the writing of articles worth submitting is a possibility. Before going on to consider the various types of articles, I propose, therefore, to say something about the way in which articles and photographs should be prepared and submitted.

In the first place consider the manuscript itself.

This should be typewritten. However legible your handwriting may be, it is asking for rejection to submit handwritten manuscripts. Many editors will not even *look* at a handwritten manuscript. If you have not a typewriter of your own, you can easily get your manuscripts typed at a shilling, or less, per thousand words. This is money well spent.

In the top right-hand corner of the first page type your name and address. This is the only proper place for them; they should not come at the end.

Always use double-spacing between the lines of type.

Every editor hates single-spacing, and many manuscripts are rejected on this account. You may wonder what difference the spacing makes. I was not aware of the difference myself until, quite early in my career, an editor who returned one of my articles put me wise. "Retype this," he said, "using double-spacing and I shall be pleased to see it again. There is no room for my sub-editor to make any necessary alterations when the lines of type are so close together."

Every manuscript should have a title page and a plain backing sheet. The majority of writers use an ordinary sheet of typing paper for the back; for myself I use a stiffer piece of paper such as is used for the covers of magazines. I find it wears better.

On the title page type the name and address in the top right-hand corner, the title across the centre, and the number of words in the bottom left-hand corner. Number the pages of the manuscript and fasten them together.

So much for the preparation of the manuscript.

We come now to illustrations.

Sometimes you may want to send pen-and-ink drawings. When this is the case execute the drawings on separate pieces of paper and put the title of the manuscript, as well as name and address, on the top of each sheet. It is a common practice to mix drawings up with the typescript. Such a practice, however, is far from popular with editors. When it comes to the actual printing the typed copy has to go to one department and the illustrations to another. If, therefore, the two are jumbled together it means cutting the manuscript about to separate them.

Drawings are best executed in Indian ink and on a good white paper.

Photographs for the press should be half-plate in size and black and white on glossy paper. Moreover, the paper should be glazed. These are the prints which give the best blocks.

Type the caption of the picture, together with the title of the article it accompanies, and your name and address on a slip of paper and paste this on the back of the print by the two ends only. The editor can then remove it while a block is being made of the picture. On the back of the print itself write your name and address with a soft pencil, taking care not to press hard enough for the pencil marks to show through. A better plan is to use a rubber stamp. You can get one of these, with a four or five line address, for a few shillings.

When a manuscript is accompanied by illustrations it is advisable to put the number of illustrations underneath the number of words on the title page.

Manuscript and illustrations are now ready for sending. How is the best way to do it?

In the first place, never roll your manuscripts, and send them out with as few folds as possible. If they are shorter than 1000 words I usually send them out in a 9" × 6" envelope; if they are longer I keep them flat and put them in a 10½" × 8½" envelope. If there are two or three illustrations I use a large envelope, however short the article. Whether they are sent flat or folded, with illustrations or not, I always enclose a piece of card. This ensures my work being clean and tidy when it reaches the editor. Being human, an editor prefers to handle work in this condition.

Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for the return of your work if it should prove unsuitable. An envelope measuring $8\frac{1}{2}" \times 5\frac{1}{2}"$ fits comfortably into a $9" \times 6"$ without folding. When using a $10\frac{1}{2}" \times 8\frac{1}{2}"$, however, I enclose one of the same size folded.

If an envelope contains illustrations it is advisable to write the words PHOTOGRAPHS—PLEASE KEEP FLAT in block letters in the top left-hand corner.

A short letter, preferably on a printed notehead, may accompany a manuscript. This is not essential, however, and many writers send out manuscripts without letters. If a manuscript is being sent as the result of a preliminary letter a short note should accompany it, **as** advised in the section dealing with that subject.

For postal purposes manuscripts and photographs are classed as "printed papers" and may, accordingly, be sent at the special printed paper rate. This, if adopted, effects a big saving in postages.

A good many articles have appeared in the writer papers, from time to time, for and against the adoption of this rate and much could be written about it here. Myself, I do not advocate the sending of manuscripts and prints to editors under unsealed cover, and at the cheap rate; but I do think it is sometimes a sane idea to provide for their return—that is, if they are unlucky enough to be returned!—under this rate. Every writer, however, must use his own discretion in this respect. Printed paper rate is not allowed if a letter accompanies a manuscript or print. This means an editor cannot tell you why he is returning your contribution, unless he puts another stamp on the return envelope. He may not always want to do this.

The rates for "printed papers" are as follows: First 2 oz. $\frac{1}{2}d.$, and $\frac{1}{2}d.$ for each 2 oz. after the first. Stamps at this rate can be fixed to return envelopes, instead of at letter rate.

To make quite sure an envelope is not sealed in the editorial offices—thereby making you liable to a postage due fee—it is a good plan to type the words "please do not seal" beneath the gum on the flap. This is certain to be seen if anyone starts to seal the envelope. It is also a good plan to type the words "Photographs Only" or "MSS. only" in the top left-hand corner of the return envelope.

Kinds of Articles

WE come now to a study of the various kinds of articles.

Roughly speaking, there are six, and they can be conveniently grouped as follows:

1. Topical.
2. Anniversary.
3. Practical.
4. Technical.
5. Psychological.
6. General.

Let us consider each of these separately.

Topical Articles

BY "topical articles" I mean articles which have some bearing on events which are in the news. I do not mean articles on the news events themselves; these will be dealt with later.

It is part of the policy of every editor to keep his paper up to date. Accordingly, many of the articles he prints are directly related to an event which is, or which is expected to be, in the public mind at the time his paper appears. We all know it is impossible to place an article on Easter Customs except for publication at Easter time. And what is true of outstanding topical events is also generally true of events which are only mildly topical.

It is often possible to give a topical twist to an article of a general nature. When this is done the article in question has a much better chance of being accepted. An article on curious wills, for instance, might go to several editors and then not be accepted. If, however, the newspapers publish an account of a well-known person who has died and left a will containing some unusual clauses, the article is easily made saleable by using an opening paragraph centred around this account.

An article is half-way to success if it has a topical opening.

In the days before I was kept as busy with my writing as I am now I always had by me a number of "stock articles". The interesting part about these was that they had no opening paragraphs; they all began on page two.

Every morning I went through my newspaper carefully and directly I came across a news item which could be used to form a topical opening to one of my stock articles, I lost no time in using it and, within less than a quarter of an hour, my article was in the post.

Speed counts a great deal where topical articles are concerned, and rejection may sometimes be due to no other reason than that an article arrived too late. It pays, therefore, to dispatch by the earliest post possible.

There is no reason why every writer should not follow the method I have just described. It only means rising a few minutes earlier, and if a useful news item is found you can post the article on your way to business. It is a glorious feeling, trotting off to catch the 8.15 with the knowledge that you have very likely earned a guinea before breakfast.

You will not, of course, find usable news items every morning, but if your supply of stock articles is a good one, there is no reason why you should not average four or five a month. Anyhow, try it!

Anniversary Articles

CLOSELY akin to topical articles are anniversary articles. These are articles which are topical, at some time or other, every year. I refer, of course, to those dealing with events like Christmas, Easter, Boat Race, Budget, and so on. It is a good plan to make a speciality of these, since the same subject can be written up year after year for different markets. Collect as many cuttings as you can, on each event, and prepare your articles well in advance.

It is a good plan to make a list of these anniversaries. Here are a few to give you a start.

January.—New Year (the Romans commenced the year in March; Mohammedans date their time from the flight of Mohammed, and so on); Twelfth Day

(dating back to the time of King Alfred); Plough Monday (the Monday following Twelfth Day); Festival of St. Hilary (13th January); St. Agnes Eve (19th January); Pantomimes; Up-Helly-Aal (ancient Norse Festival celebrated by the inhabitants of the Shetland Isles on the last Thursday in the month); and Reed Harvesting on the Norfolk Broads.

February.—Shrove Tuesday (there are several interesting customs connected with this); Chinese New Year's Day; St. Valentine's Day; St. Bridget's Day; Cruft's Dog Show; and the British Industries Fair.

March.—Boat Race; Grand National; Trial of the Pyx (a ceremony which takes place at Goldsmiths' Hall during the first week in March); St. David's Day (1st March); St. Willen's Day (3rd March); St. Patrick's Day (17th March); and Lady Day.

April.—April Fool's Day; Festival of the Passover; St. George's Day (23rd April); Easter; Summer Time; Distributing the "Maundy Money" (given by the King to a number of old men and women); Sinking of the *Titanic* (15th April); Preaching of the "Spital" Sermon (before the Lord Mayor of London and City Corporation); Cup Final; and Badger Hunting (a sport that is *not* cruel).

May.—Opening of Cricket Season; May Day; Beating the Bounds; Empire Day; Industrial Sunday (towards the end of the month); St. Dunstan's Day (19th May); Pigeon Racing; Whitsun; Eights Week (at Oxford); Sheep Shearing Commences; and Royal Academy Exhibition.

June.—The Derby; Irish Derby; Grand Prix de Paris; Ascot Week; May Week (at Cambridge);

Longest Day; Festival of St. John the Baptist; St. Barnabas Day (11th June); Battle of Waterloo (18th June); Mother's Day (24th June); and the Wakes (held in Lancashire towns from the middle of the month until the end).

July.—Dominion Day (1st July—a great day in Canada); Independence Day (4th July—a great day in America); St. Swithin's Day (15th July); St. James's Day (25th July); Dog Days; Baby Week; Goodwood Races; Race for the Doggett Coat and Badge (on the Thames); Lord's Week; and Festival of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (first Sunday following 16th July).

August.—Cowes Week; Harvesting; Festival of St. Bartholomew (24th August); Royal National Eisteddfod; Meeting of the Woodmen of Arden (the oldest archery society in England); Minden Day (1st August); August Bank Holiday; Cart Horse Parade in Regent's Park; and the annual Athletic Festival at Grasmere.

September.—Yom Kippur (a well-known Jewish feast); St. Matthew's Day (21st September); National Brass Band Festival; Highland Games; Hop-picking; and the Swearing in of the Sheriffs of the City of London.

October.—Michaelmas Day; Cider making; Summer Time ends; Annual Feast of the Sheffield Cutlers (in the middle of the month); Colchester Oyster Feast; Dairy Show; Fruiterers' Company presents fruit to the Lord Mayor; Annual Meeting of the Society of Englishmen (founded to revive the observance of St. George's Day); and the Harvesting of Peppermint.

November.—Guy Fawkes' Day; "Shooting Stars" are seen regularly in the middle of the month; Armistice

Day; Feast of Martinmas (11th November); Lord Mayor's Show; St. Clement's Day; and St. Catherine's Day.

December.—Christmas; Festival of St. Nicholas (6th December); St. Kenelm's Day (30th December); Smithfield Cattle Show; Founder's Day at Eton; and the "Halcyon Days" (the days between 14th and 28th December).

I am often asked when is the best time to submit anniversary articles. It is important to know this, since it is very easy to submit them too late. The one fact to bear in mind is that many of the weekly and monthly magazines go to press well in advance of publication date. It is not too early to begin submitting anniversary articles to the monthly magazines four months ahead; and to the weeklies eight or nine weeks ahead. With newspapers it is not advisable to work too far ahead, otherwise your manuscript may be forgotten. A week ahead is plenty.

Christmas Articles

CHRISTMAS articles deserve a section to themselves. There are probably more openings for articles dealing with this world-wide Festival than for any other subject one could name. Many newspapers and magazines publish special Christmas numbers, the majority publish enlarged numbers, and magazines which remain staid and heavy throughout the rest of the year brighten up their pages and introduce seasonable features at Christmas time.

I know one free-lance who concentrates entirely on

Christmas stuff and makes a good living from it. He said to me once: "I have come to the conclusion that *every* newspaper and magazine published, no matter for what class of reader it caters, is worth trying with Christmas features." My own experience endorses this.

It is advisable to submit Christmas articles five months in advance. When most people are sweltering in the August sunshine the free-lance who knows his job is writing and dispatching articles on Christmas, and the bleakest period of the year. It will be remembered that some Christmas Numbers are on sale towards the end of November and many of them close for press in October.

In case you are still thinking about my friend who writes nothing else but Christmas features, and are wondering how on earth he finds sufficient subjects to occupy his time, let me suggest a few. Maybe these will set you to work and enable you to sell many articles of your own.

Christmas in Other Lands.—A number of articles can be written on this subject, each article confined to one country—or you can write two or three general articles, containing references to several countries—or the way people in different countries treat one particular part of the festival (the Christmas Tree, for example).

Games, Tricks and Puzzles.—Articles dealing with these subjects find a place in scores of newspapers and magazines, particularly House Magazines—carefully drawn diagrams must be included when necessary.

Christmas Cards.—How they originated—some outstanding designs—romance connected with them—where they are printed.

Presents.—Many articles can be written on how to make home-made presents, and offered to the domestic weeklies and juvenile papers—suggestions for presents also make acceptable articles—attractive ways of packing presents is another good angle from which to approach the subject.

Santa Claus.—Who was he?—how is he regarded by children in other lands?—think, too, about the men who impersonate him at the big stores—what would *you* do if you were Santa Claus?

The Christmas Table.—There is good scope for practical articles describing how to arrange the Christmas table in an attractive manner—experiment in this direction, using candles, fruit, bon-bons, flowers, &c., and photograph your experiments.

Carols.—How they originated—stories connected with their writers—carol singing in olden times.

Post Office Work.—Christmas time is the busiest time of the year in the Post Office, and numerous articles can be written about the way the work is carried through—get some posting tips from your local postmaster—interview a temporary postman.

The Law at Christmas Time.—There are all sorts of things we *mustn't* do at Christmas, that is, if we are to keep strictly within the law. We *mustn't* watch a football match, for instance, or eat a mince pie!

Parties.—These are in full swing round about Christmas time, and hosts and hostesses are often at their wits' end to know how to keep guests entertained *all* the time. Many editors welcome articles on this subject.

Animals at Christmas Time.—It is nice to remember these as well as ourselves—in some foreign countries

there are special customs connected with animals.

Turkeys.—How they are reared—why they have become so popular—how to carve a turkey (I hope I see this article!).

How Famous People Spend Christmas.—Members of the Royal Family—stage, screen and radio folk—well-known figures abroad, and so on.

Christmas in History.—What notable events have occurred on Christmas Day in the past?

Christmas Trees.—How the custom originated—growing the trees—decorating them—points to look for when selecting a tree.

Christmas in Olden Days.—This subject should provide material for countless articles—how did people travel at Christmas time?—did they eat bigger meals than we do now? (go back to the Middle Ages and you will be surprised at what they *did* eat!)—what were their chief pastimes?—what was Christmas like in the days of the Puritans?

Children and Christmas.—Do not forget that Christmas is the children's time—articles on how to entertain them are worth considering—also child welfare articles in keeping with the season.

Crackers.—How did they originate?—how are they made?—what outstanding crackers have been known in the past?

Christmas and the Christ.—In all our preparations for Christmas, and our enjoyment of it, we are apt to forget the central figure behind it all—there is room for several articles written around this theme.

Christmas in the Services.—How is the Day spent in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and so on?

Christmas in Prose and Poetry.—What have our great writers written about the Festival?

Christmas in Nature.—The countryside and hedgerows.

Holly and Mistletoe.—What do they stand for?—when were they first used?—what superstitions are connected with them?—how, and where, are they grown?

Toys.—Articles can be written about the toys of yesterday and to-day—which, do you consider, are the best toys to give to children?—some toys are dangerous—what effects have different toys on the mind of a child?

Haunted Houses.—Christmas is the time of the year when we are expected to hear about spooks and haunted houses.

Christmas Catering.—There are endless opportunities for well-written articles dealing with this subject.

Christmas Business.—What effect has Christmas on the general business of the country?—roughly how much money changes hands?—how can small shop-keepers increase their Christmas trade?

Christmas Sport.—Football, hunting, and so on.

Christmas Stamps.—Many European countries issue special stamps for the Christmas festival.

This list does not by any means exhaust the number of possible subjects connected with Christmas. It does show, however, what a wide range exists.

Many of the syndicates welcome Christmas articles, if approached soon enough. They usually start making out their lists in June or July. Two firms I have worked with myself, in this respect, are the following:

Empire Service, 4/7 Red Lion Court, Fleet St., E.C.4.
National Press Agency, Ltd., 2 & 3 Red Lion Court,
Fleet St., E.C.4.

Practical Articles

THERE is a bigger demand than ever to-day for practical articles—articles which describe, in a simple way, how to make and do things.

For the purpose of examining this demand more fully let us divide publications into the following four groups—(1) Juvenile, (2) Domestic, (3) Trade, (4) General.

Into the first class fall all those magazines and annuals which are published to interest boys and girls up to the age of 17 or 18, and the children's sections of London and provincial newspapers and a few of the weeklies.

All children like to be doing things. Editors know this and they are therefore always pleased to consider practical articles. Length may be anything from 200 to 2000 words and sufficient photographs or pen-and-ink drawings, to explain the text, should accompany each article.

To give a list of suitable subjects would need several pages of this book. There are thousands of them. You have only to look around you to find them. There are many everyday things you can write about, providing you treat them in your own way.

Here is an illustration. Some time ago I was turning out a cupboard and came across an old box-kite which had brought me hours of pleasure as a boy. I had not

made it—it had been bought for me—but when I came to examine it I could see that a box-kite was by no means a difficult thing to make. So I set about making one of my own. It was not an elaborate affair—I did not spend much time over it—but it proved satisfactory, and I knew then that I could write an interesting article about it.

Not worth the trouble, you say? Well, apart from the fact that the kite took no more than a few minutes to construct, and cost only a few pence, I have so far managed to place *four* articles dealing with the construction of a box-kite—to an annual, a newspaper, *Hobbies Weekly* and *Peter Pan Monthly*. The net cash return has been just under £5.

Providing you allow a fair time to elapse between submissions, and rewrite your article in each instance, there is nothing to prevent you from sending practical articles, on the same subject, to a number of different markets. Do not imagine that because you have written one short article on a certain subject you are not at liberty to write on that subject again. I have met more than one free-lance who has been under this impression.

When writing practical articles for juvenile papers be very careful to make your explanations as simple as possible. It is best to assume that the reader knows nothing at all about the subject you are handling. Pay special attention to your diagrams; these should be as near self-explanatory as possible.

For juvenile markets, pen-and-ink drawings are better than photographic illustrations. This does not necessarily mean that the editors prefer pen-and-ink drawings, but they use them because they are so much

cheaper to reproduce than photographs. Few of the juvenile papers can be called wealthy and expense has to be carefully considered.

Into our second class fall the weekly and monthly magazines published for the home. *Home Chat*, *Home Notes*, *Woman's Magazine*, and *Modern Woman* are examples.

The editors of these magazines have more money at their disposal and, as a general rule, would rather see photographic illustrations than pen-and-ink drawings.

There are plenty of openings in these domestic magazines for well-illustrated articles of the "how-to-do-it" type, but it must be borne in mind that only first-class illustrations are considered. This fact, however, need not keep any writer from trying these markets—no matter if he is a poor photographer, or has never taken a picture in his life. If an idea appeals, an editor will often arrange to have her own pictures made in a leading photographic studio.

In the days when my knowledge of photography was not so extensive as at present, and when I found the photographing of still-life indoors a little difficult, I got the editor of *Woman's Magazine* interested in an illustrated article dealing with the subject of *Painted Woodwork*. I sent the article in, together with some illustrations I had taken myself, and received a reply to the effect that, although the article was acceptable, the photographs were not. "If, however," continued the editor, "you care to send the articles along, as mentioned in the article, I shall be pleased to have them photographed in London." This I did, and as soon as

they had served their purpose they were returned to me. In due course the article appeared in print, well illustrated.

Number of illustrations and length of manuscript depend upon the market. Generally speaking, it can be assumed that the twopenny and threepenny magazines favour lengths from 100 to 750 words, with one, two or three illustrations; and the sixpenny and shilling magazines any length up to 1500 words and any number of illustrations up to eight or ten.

Two subjects—*household hints* and *hobbies*—cover most of the articles used. Practical articles dealing with hobbies are favoured more by editors of the monthlies than of the weeklies. Both, however, are keen on seeing well-illustrated household hints—such as *Minor Electricity Repairs, Setting a Party Table, How to Cover a Suite, Cleaning Pewter Ware*, and so on.

Some magazines—particularly Church magazines—publish a Women's Section, and practical articles are occasionally used in these.

Publications which fall into the third class are those published in the interests of certain trades. *Caterer and Hotel Keeper, The Electrician, Hardware Trade Journal, Meat Trade's Journal*, and *Men's Wear* are examples.

Editors of all trade journals, almost without exception, are glad to consider practical articles, in keeping with the trades covered by their titles. Especially are they pleased to see articles likely to help their readers to produce better goods, or make more sales.

It is not necessary to be directly connected with a trade in order to write articles about it. I have proved

this over and over again, and have written numerous articles about trades which do not interest me in the least. The information contained in the articles, however, has been good—otherwise it would not have found its way into print.

How have I obtained this information? Simply by keeping my eyes open and not being afraid to ask questions. I see as much as I can of every shop I go into, and if anything strikes me as being original I endeavour to get the proprietor to talk to me about it. If it is some sort of gadget he has made himself, or a brilliant advertising idea he has thought out himself, he is usually only too willing to do this. At heart, all men are egoists!

Editors of trade papers like their contributions to be short—available space for matter other than news is usually limited—and generally prefer pen-and-ink illustrations to photographs. If, however, a single photograph almost explains itself, it stands a good chance of acceptance.

Into the fourth class falls a variety of newspapers and magazines, the majority of which publish practical articles only at odd times.

The outstanding exception is the gardening press. I suppose, by rights, this should have been put into a class of its own, for the papers published in the interests of gardeners are largely composed of practical articles—articles which describe how to grow flowers, vegetables and fruit, or how to make useful gadgets for use on the land.

A few of the papers in this group are *Smallholder*, *Popular Gardening*, *Amateur Gardening* and *Home*

Gardening, and if you have anything at all interesting to say you will find that these papers are some of the easiest to break into. Articles should be kept short, and the illustrations should be pen-and-ink drawings, rather than photographs.

The payment made by the gardening press is never princely—seldom exceeding £1 a thousand—but, as pointed out in the previous paragraph, it is by no means a difficult market to enter. Here again, if you are not a gardener, you have only to keep your eyes open in order to come across hundreds of subjects likely to meet with acceptance. For instance, I came across a man once who was using a special home-made dibber. It was different from other dibbers in that it could be used either with a flat bottom or a pointed bottom. I made a pen-and-ink sketch of it, wrote 200 words about the making of it, and sold the contribution to *Smallholder* for 7s. 6d.

It is impossible to give a list here of all the publications which fall into this fourth class, partly because there are so many of them and partly because editorial requirements are constantly changing. It can be said with safety, however, that every editor is willing to consider practical articles—providing they are in close keeping with the title of his publication.

Practical articles on a variety of subjects can be placed with the newspapers, both London and Provincial, although it must be borne in mind that the space available for such articles is not great. To interest a newspaper editor it is necessary to present a subject which is likely to appeal to a large body of readers. When the ice-skating boom commenced, for instance,

I sold an article of 1000 words, on figure skating, to the editor of the *Star*. It was published on the Leader Page and brought me five guineas.

Technical Articles

THERE is a big demand to-day for technical articles and the payment for them is good. Before one can hope to write and sell these articles, however, it is necessary to be something of an authority on the subject dealt with.

Magazines which publish technical articles are those dealing with wireless, television, engineering, electricity, cycling, motoring, aeronautics, model-making, photography, and so on.

When writing technical articles there are three important points to keep in mind: (1) All the facts, especially measurements, must be absolutely correct; (2) the instructions given must be easy to follow; and (3) diagrams and photographs must be as near self-explanatory as possible.

This latter point is very important and needs a somewhat lengthy consideration. Technical articles often stand or fall on the quality of their illustrations. I have mentioned photographs, but, generally speaking, line drawings best serve the purpose and are more widely favoured by editors.

You need not be an expert draughtsman in order to present diagrams in an easily understood form. Most papers employ draughtsmen of their own to copy their writers' diagrams. But you must know sufficient about pen-and-ink drawing to be able to carry out drawings

which a draughtsman can follow. Moreover, there is always the possibility that the editor you are sending to likes to use as many of the actual drawings sent to him by his contributors as possible, and the better your drawings are, then, the greater the chance of acceptance.

A word, first, about materials.

The paper you use must be selected with care. It is unwise to use a cheap grade of cartridge paper, for the simple reason that its surface pulls up when a rubber is applied. Undoubtedly the best material is Bristol Board, and the second best is hot pressed drawing paper. Both can be obtained at any good stationer's and a good sized sheet of either costs less than a shilling. It will be found that both withstand any amount of rubbing, the process tending, in fact, to wear the rubber more than the board or paper. Where errors have occurred after inking in, and rubbing out is not desirable, the offending parts may be covered up with Chinese or Process White. Neither of these comes out on a photograph and, when dry, they may be printed over.

The instruments you require are a *good* ruler—if you buy a cheap one you will find it has a rough edge, and the pen will occasionally catch in it; a set of 6-inch compasses; a 2H pencil; and an H pencil.

There is an art in using a drawing pen, and few amateurs spend the time necessary to get good results with one. You cannot rush the work. It has to be done with care.

The correct ink to use is what is known as Indian ink. Do not dip the pen into this but transfer a little

of it to the tip of the pen by means of a special quill pen which is made for the purpose. When one supply of ink is exhausted, clean the nib of the pen with a clean rag before applying more. If you use a nib which has a coating of dry ink you will find it impossible to draw a firm straight line.

The pencils used should have chisel points. Until you get used to these points you may find them a trifle awkward, but once you do get used to them you will find they are far more satisfactory than the more common round point. The professional draughtsman always uses a chisel point. The best way of maintaining such points is to sharpen them with fine sand-paper.

We come now to the drawings themselves, and the first thing to learn about these is that they should be made several times larger than they will appear in actual print. It is possible to work better on a larger drawing, and when it is reduced, for block-making, any slight imperfections it may contain will almost disappear. Remember, however, that the whole thing will be reduced and that all lettering and numbering must be in proportion with the drawing. It is a common mistake to make a large drawing and then put small lettering. If such efforts were reduced and printed one would need a microscope to read the letters.

Make your drawings first of all in pencil—using the 2H grade—and then go over them carefully with ink. (That is, of course, if you are submitting finished drawings. If you know that a paper employs its own draughtsman you need not trouble to ink in; instead, you can go over the lines carefully with the H pencil).

Indian ink is slow to dry. You must therefore be

careful or you will make a number of ugly smudges. Ink in a line or circle at one end of the drawing first; then go to the other end and ink in a line or two there. Go backwards and forwards in this way and you will not have to put your ruler on inked in parts until they are quite dry.

Make firm lines, of equal width, and see that they really are black lines. If you do not press hard enough on the pen you will get thin grey lines. These make poor blocks; either they do not come out at all, or they come out in pieces. Do not forget that secondary lines should be broken. If you wish to show the invisible sides of a cube, for instance, put those sides in the form of broken lines.

Make up your mind, at the start, what lettering you are going to use. Then stick to it. Some amateurs use two or three different kinds of lettering on the same drawing. This makes for confusion. For preference, use roman capitals throughout. Start the lettering at the top of the drawing, on the left-hand side, and work from left to right. Do not underline the lettering and keep it a respectable distance from the outline of the drawing. If you are not good at lettering it is advisable to write it in pencil only and leave the editor to get it inked in properly. If he does not employ a professional draughtsman he probably has someone in the office who can do this work well.

If there is more than one drawing connected with the same article, give each drawing a Figure number. You can then refer to each one easily, when writing up the article.

The article itself should, as the second point suggests,

be easy to follow. Great care must be taken to arrange your instructions in a logical order. Sometimes a great deal of thought is needed to make this possible, but unless you make it possible your article will not be a success. One piece of instruction must lead naturally to the next. There must be no jumping about. However you write the article it will be easy for *you* to follow, since you have the subject at your finger tips. You have to assume, however, that the reader knows nothing about it at all and he is likely to get into a hopeless muddle if you do not lead him along in proper stages.

There must be no wandering from the subject, in a technical article. Get right down to it in the first sentence and keep strictly to the subject throughout.

Psychological Articles

PSYCHOLOGICAL articles are the most difficult to write and the hardest to dispose of when they have been written. Unless, therefore, a beginner finds that he has a natural bent towards this type of article it is unwise to concentrate on it.

In many instances this is just the kind of article the beginner works on, and after four or five attempts, and just as many failures, he begins to lose heart. The quickest way into print is by way of the practical article; the hardest, by way of the psychological article. Readers who have not yet got their feet firmly fixed on the bottom rungs of the ladder would do well to bear this in mind. The time to turn to the psychological article is when, by experience, you can be said

to have gained a fairly wide knowledge of editorial requirements.

There is not such a big demand for the psychological article—articles like *Why Not Vamp Your Husband?* and *The Girl Who is So-so*—as most beginners imagine. Outside the domestic weeklies and monthlies, and the Home Pages of a few newspapers, the demand is almost non-existent. Even the papers which *do* publish this type of article often do not make room for more than one or two in each issue and these are frequently under a well-known name.

It is fairly easy to get ideas for psychological articles if you go about listening to your friends talking and arguing—particularly arguing! It is not so easy, however, when you come to put those ideas in the form of articles. The market for this type of article being so restricted, and the supply so large, a high standard can be demanded and obtained. That is why so many of these articles appear under the same names—writers who have acquired the knack of making their points convincing and of presenting them in a light and attractive style.

General Articles

THE term “general articles” naturally covers a very wide field. It covers all those articles which do not fall conveniently into any one of the four groups already dealt with. And there are a great many of these.

We might describe these articles as being interesting to a large circle of people but possessing little, or no,

topical value and being neither practical nor psychological in treatment. There are thousands of such articles published each year, and hundreds of newspapers and magazines which feature them.

General articles are acceptable to an editor if he feels satisfied that their subject-matter will interest a large percentage of his readers.

Consider a few such articles.

The popularity of the bicycle and the motor-car have brought a big demand for travel articles. All the motoring and cycling papers—*Autocar*, *Austin Magazine*, *Popular Motoring*, *Dominion News*, *Morris Owner*, *Vauxhall Motorist*, *Standard Car Review*, *Cycling*, *Cyclist* and *Bicycle*, to mention but a few—feature these articles in every issue. One comes across them often in the London and Provincial newspapers and in several magazines like *Rover World*, *Caravan* and *Caravan World*. They are to be found also, in a slightly different form, in the Church magazines—*Sign*, *Symbol*, *Church Monthly*, *Sentinel*, *Home Words*, and so on.

A few titles, taken at random from some of these publications, give a very good indication of the kind of subject-matter favoured. Here are a dozen—*Village Names*, *Touring the Dickens Country*, *Stories in Northern Bridges*, *Stained Glass Curiosities*, *The Charm of Ashdown Forest*, *Among the Big Hills*, *A Golfing Holiday*, *Odd Corners of London*, *Ancient Monuments*, *The Hammer Ponds*, *Ancient Almshouses* and *Eyesores Which Destroy Beautiful Britain*.

It is fairly easy to get material for articles such as these. A certain amount can be culled from the Guide Books—although the finished article must never betray

the fact that it owes its existence partly to this form of reference; interesting facts can often be picked up from local inhabitants—the older the better; additional information may be obtained from books and pamphlets on local history in the local library; and further facts still from general books to be found in any public library. Clergymen in country parishes are also worth chatting with. It is really astonishing what some of these good fellows know about the history of their church and the land which comes within their parish. I have picked many a vicar's brain and turned my "pickings" into hard cash. *You* can do the same.

Articles such as those I have been mentioning should invariably be accompanied by photographs. (If you do not possess a camera you really must get one; you will find that hundreds of additional markets will open up to you.) These photographs should contain plenty of pictorial interest, or show clearly some place or object referred to in the article.

If the article is intended for motoring or cycling papers, a motor-car or bicycle, in one or two of the accompanying photographs is desirable. A word of warning here, however. Do not forget that you will never sell a photograph featuring an Austin car to the editor of *Morris Owner*, or a Standard to the editor of *Ford Times*. Also, an editor is seldom interested in a photograph featuring a car which is obviously several months old.

Another type of article for which there is a big demand is that dealing with films, plays or broadcasting. Particularly are editors interested in articles dealing with personalities connected with these. I

have discovered that it is possible to sell articles of this kind to almost any newspaper or magazine, if only the article is made to conform with the editorial policy of the newspaper or magazine concerned.

I have sold film articles to *Hairdressers' Weekly Journal* and radio articles to *Sunday-at-Home*. An article sold to the former dealt with the hair-styles favoured by some of our leading film stars; and to the latter with the religious broadcast services.

An article on any of these subjects stands a better chance of acceptance if accompanied by two or three good illustrations. You will not be likely to get many photographs of your own, suitable for this purpose, but in another section of this book you will learn how such photographs may be easily obtained from various sources.

Another type of article which finds its way into a large number of magazines is that dealing with animal life. Most people never tire of reading about dogs, or birds, or animals of the countryside, or giants of the forest. Articles of this description can be placed in almost any publication, outside the trade press. Even the latter, however, is not an altogether closed shop, for one frequently comes across nature articles in magazines like *Ford Times*, *Morris Owner* and *Austin Magazine*.

Regular Connexions

PAUSE a minute here, reader, and consider how far we have got. If you have followed the earlier sections carefully, and have put what I have tried to teach you into practice, you are now beginning to write articles which you have reason to believe are saleable.

Good. Now let me give you a sound piece of advice. If you want to make your writing *pay*—and without a doubt you do—you must not be, what I would call, a “spasmodic contributor”. If you are, you will never get very far.

What you must strive to do is to work up regular connexions. I mean by this that you must try to get so well known to a handful of editors, that they will come to look upon you as a regular contributor. It does not follow from this that you will have, or will be expected to have, an article in every issue of a paper; but that you are represented often enough to keep your name fresh in the mind of the editor. When he sees one of your manuscripts on his desk he should be able to say to himself, “Oh, yes, this is from so-and-so. I have used several of his articles before. The title of this one is attractive. I expect it will be O.K.”

How can you get these regular connexions? In the first place do not bombard as many editors as you can think of, one after another, with ideas and manuscripts. Instead, concentrate on a score or so of markets and keep studying them, and submitting your work to them, until eventually you break into them. And

once you have broken in—KEEP IN. As soon as an editor accepts one manuscript—send him another. If possible, make it a little better than the previous one.

If you do this an editor will soon get to know your work and eventually he will come to depend upon you—and you will have made *a regular connexion*.

Let us sum up this advice in a few words and print those words in capitals so that they will more readily impress themselves on your mind:

CONCENTRATE ON A FEW MARKETS, STUDY
THEM, CONTINUE TO SUBMIT WORK UNTIL
YOU BREAK IN—THEN KEEP IN.

A few points here may be of help.

1. *Make certain the markets you are studying are ones for which you are fitted to write.* When you are commencing your career as a writer it is most essential to select your markets with care. If you do this you will be saved a lot of heartbreak. Do not aim too high to begin with. Leave out the national newspapers and the popular magazines with enormous circulations. Concentrate on the lesser fry. Competition will be less keen, but in many cases you will find the payment as good.

2. *Make certain outside contributions are accepted.* Not every editor is open to consider outside contributions. Some are kept supplied by a regular staff of writers.

3. *Make certain that payment is made for accepted work.* Some editors invite outside contributions but make no payment for anything accepted and published. The requirements of these are not worth bothering

about. It may be good practice to write for magazines which do not pay, but it is a habit which should not be encouraged. It is just as good practice to write for papers that do pay—even if your work is not accepted. You at least have the satisfaction of knowing that it *might* be accepted and that if it does payment will follow.

Writing for papers that do not pay may give you a false impression of your capabilities. The standard demanded by such papers is not usually high. The fact that your work appears in *print*, however, may lead you to believe that it is up to publication standard, whereas, in reality, it may fall very short of this standard as judged by that set by papers which make a payment.

4. *Study carefully subjects, style and length required by the markets you are trying to enter.* This is very important. In no other way will you get a clear idea of any particular paper's needs.

5. *Do not pester an editor with letters asking why he does not accept your work.* No, for goodness' sake don't! There is no more certain way of getting into an editor's bad books—a thing you must avoid at all costs. Make it a rule never to send a letter to an editor unless a letter is absolutely necessary.

Finding Markets

I ONCE received a letter from a friend, whose work I had often criticized, informing me he had lost two or three of his regular markets and imploring me to tell him where he might find others to take their places.

This is, I believe, a difficulty which troubles many free-lance writers, and I therefore propose to deal with it at some length.

First of all I would impress upon you the need of, what might be called, "cultivating your newsagent". An obliging newsagent is a writer's best friend. Remember that and work on it.

Select for your newsagent a go-ahead sort of person; one who, although not having an enormous business perhaps invariably gives his magazines a good show. Buy all your papers from this man, call on him frequently, and get to know him personally. Tell him you are a writer and that you are interested in all new magazines. Ask him if he will let you see any new publications which are sent to him, and whether he will object to your glancing through a few copies of current issues when you call for your regular papers. Examine every new paper carefully and purchase any which appear to offer scope for the type of work in which you specialize.

You will be surprised at the number of magazines about which you have never heard displayed in a newsagent's shop. I can seldom go into my newsagent's even now without finding some publication which I had never had a chance of examining before.

Your newsagent will be only too willing to let you look through his magazines if he finds you are tempted to purchase some. Do not make a nuisance of yourself, however, by staying too long, and be careful to replace papers so that they do not appear to have been disturbed. The newsagent will not thank you if you leave his shelves untidy.

Most newsagents get a weekly or monthly list from their wholesaler giving particulars of new publications, papers being suspended, changes of ownership, and so on. One of the best lists in this respect is *Smith's Weekly Circular*. This paper is not on sale, and it is possible to see copies only through the kindness of newsagents who receive them. When you have got to know your newsagent fairly well, you can mention these lists to him and see if he will pass them on to you when he has finished with them. My own experience is that, although the lists are published to help those in the trade, they are not always read and are often thrown away as soon as they arrive. I have always managed to find a newsagent who was only too pleased to give me his copy, and I have even had it delivered on Saturday mornings with the usual papers. You may be lucky enough to do the same.

You will not find a lot of useful material in these lists, but they will enable you to keep in touch with new magazines and save you the trouble of submitting work to papers which have suspended publication.

Next to your newsagent's, the best place for finding openings is in the Public Library. I make a habit of spending at least one afternoon a week in the Reading Room of the local library, and I seldom come away without some knowledge which, sooner or later, proves valuable to me.

Arm yourself with a notebook and give a thorough study to as many magazines as you can. Observe how many articles each one publishes and write down particulars of types, lengths, and number of illustrations. Also, make a note of the publishing addresses.

Do not neglect a study of *any* magazine. It is an interesting fact that a publication which seems to afford no scope, at a casual glance, often discloses unlimited possibilities when it is carefully examined. That, at least, is my own experience.

Read as many of the contributions as you can in each magazine, for there is no better way of getting an up-to-date knowledge of market requirements.

Some Reading Rooms contain a few provincial newspapers. Do not overlook these. Study them on different days if you can, since many of them often publish Home Pages, or Magazine pages, on certain days of the week only.

While at the Library glance through the Personal columns of *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*. If you can get access to these papers daily for this purpose, do so. It will pay you.

The Times gave me my first introduction to paragraph writing. In a certain issue I found an announcement inviting those who thought they could supply reliable gossip paragraphs to communicate with the advertiser through a box number. I replied to the advertisement, stating exactly what I thought I could do, and received a letter from the Gossip Editor of the *Daily Mirror* offering to take my work and asking how much I was prepared to accept for it. I asked a fee of 5s. a paragraph—which was 1s. 6d. above that usually paid—and have received this rate for scores of contributions since.

From the *Daily Telegraph* I once learned that the editor of *Queen* was in need of suitable material. I promptly studied a copy of the paper and within two

months I had sold three articles. These were paid for, on acceptance, at the rate of two and a half guineas per 1000 words.

The small advertisements appearing in *World's Press News* are also worth studying. Some time ago the Home Page editor of a provincial newspaper used this medium to ask for suitable contributions. As a result I succeeded in selling a series of six articles.

The same paper recently contained an advertisement inviting manuscripts from readers who felt they could supply a feature similar to that conducted by Beachcomber in the *Daily Express*. It appeared that a regular feature was required, and through this small advertisement some reader, no doubt, was fortunate enough to pick up a commission which was well worth having.

Early in my career I began to make a habit of keeping one specimen copy of every magazine and newspaper that came my way. I have found this an excellent practice and one which can help to increase output considerably.

Whenever I am stuck for something to write about (which is seldom) it is only necessary for me to turn to my file and glance through copies of a few magazines. Ideas, suitable for one or two of them, then quickly present themselves to me.

For the sake of convenience copies should be kept in alphabetical order, and it is a good idea, also, to paste a small piece of paper on the front cover of each and jot down particulars of the main requirements.

A friend of mine, who seemed unable to find sufficient outlet for his work, suddenly hit upon a very good

idea. He commenced to work through a Market Guide and sent for specimen copies of all the publications with which he was not already acquainted.

He started, of course, with the "A's", but before he got through a quarter of the book he had discovered so many new and out-of-the-way markets—at any rate to him—that he found it hard work keeping them supplied with the amount of material they were able to take.

This is an idea which many young writers would undoubtedly find profitable and I pass it on for what it is worth.

It should not be necessary to remind you that, in your quest for markets, you should give an intelligent study to the few magazines published in the interests of the writer.

I have actually met free-lances who have left off subscribing to one or other of the free-lance papers *on the plea of economy*. What false economy! There are only three magazines, devoted solely to the interests of writers, published in this country, and a sum of twenty-four shillings covers the cost of a year's postal subscription to all of them. I refer to the *Writer* (6d. monthly, 7s. per annum), 34 Paternoster Row, London, E.C.4; *Writer's Own Magazine* (6d. monthly, 7s. per annum), "Clevelands", Westgate-on-Sea, and *Free-Lance Weekly* (2½d. weekly, 10s. per annum), 30 Grafton Street, London, E.1.

Each of these magazines contains tips in *every* issue which are worth following up, and the small subscription necessary should easily be recovered scores of times from an intelligent use of the information given.

World's Press News (6d. weekly), 48 Fetter Lane, E.C.4, contains a page of free-lance matter in each issue, and useful tips and markets can often be picked up from this.

If you live in, or near, London, or visit the city and have a few hours to spare, you can spend a profitable time searching for markets among the offices in Fleet Street.

Many of the large provincial newspapers have London offices. You can enter these and study a file of copies which is always kept on hand. In this way you can quickly grasp the general requirements of each paper.

If you wish, you can purchase copies of various newspapers and take them home to place in your file. You will probably find there are several newspapers, with offices in, or near, Fleet Street, which you never knew existed and which are not listed in many reference books.

Other markets for your work can be discovered through an intelligent study of advertisers' announcements. Everyone, to-day, knows the value of advertising, and firms are often on the look-out for free-lances who can supply them with matter for interesting booklets or who have something really original which can be made to form part of an arresting advertisement.

I know one writer who submitted a few short manuscripts to the Kodak Co. and was asked, on the strength of these, to write a weekly article of 250 words for an advertisement in one of the national newspapers. The commission lasted a year and a fee of £2, 2s. was paid for each article.

Another man I know was advised to submit a copy of one of his lectures to the Pelman Institute. He did so, through the firm's advertising agents, and immediately received an offer of ten guineas for it.

The great thing to keep in mind, when submitting manuscripts or ideas to advertisers, is *originality*. They have no time for commonplace suggestions. For really first-class ideas and write-ups, however, they have both time and money.

In your search for markets there are a few points to bear in mind.

In the first place it is as well to remember that the requirements of editors are always changing. This is a fact which many free-lances overlook. If a paper does not appear suitable for your type of contribution this week, it may in a month or two's time. It is wise, therefore, to study markets as frequently as possible.

Secondly, do not take it for granted that a feature which appears to be written by a member of the staff *is* a staff feature. Many free-lances miss openings in this way. If the feature interests you, send a letter of inquiry to the editor. You will be assured of a courteous reply.

Thirdly, never allow one or two rejections to be the means of closing a market to you. Many free-lance writers give up all hopes of breaking into a market if they do not meet with an acceptance after one or two attempts. If you feel you *can* write for a particular paper keep studying copies of it, and submitting manuscripts to it, until you *do* succeed in getting into it.

Finally, never forget that it is useless to search for possible markets if you do not offer good, original matter once you have found them.

House Journals

HOUSE JOURNALS are magazines published by business firms either (1) as staff journals; or (2) as publicity periodicals.

My experience of these journals is an interesting one. It can be summed up in three short sentences. They are difficult to find. They are usually in need of material. Their rate of pay is high.

Few of the House Journals are listed in any of the well-known market guides and one only finds them by stumbling across them.

It is impossible to say much, in a general sense, about these magazines since the requirements of one often differ very widely from the requirements of another. The best thing to do is to send for two or three specimen copies and study them carefully. Note particularly whether it is part of the editorial policy to publish only such contributions as have a direct, or indirect, bearing on the firm's goods or services; or whether it is merely to entertain and leave the advertisement pages to "speak for themselves". If in doubt, a courteous letter of inquiry will always bring an editorial ruling.

Payment offered by these magazines is seldom less than two guineas a thousand words, and often works out at four guineas. Moreover, "payment on accept-

ance" rather than "on publication" is the rule. Sometimes an editor will ask the writer to name his own fee. When this is the case it is always safe to ask two guineas a thousand.

Here are details of the requirements of a few of these magazines:

Bibby's Hearth and Farm is a lavishly produced quarterly published by J. Bibby & Sons, Ltd., King Edward Street, Liverpool, 3. Bibby & Sons are makers of cattle food and the greater part of the magazine is given over to articles concerned with stock. Thus we find, *The Future of the Beef Market* and *The Control of Pasture Plants*. There are, however, one or two more general articles, such as *Along the Hedgeside*, *Does It Matter What Man Believes?* and *The Colonisation of the Holy Land*. Photographic illustrations are used in connexion with practically every article. The editor likes to consider an idea before seeing the actual manuscript.

Book Window is a quarterly published by W. H. Smith & Son, Strand House, W.C.2., and is described as "A Guide to Book Buying and Book Reading". Articles dealing with books or authors are given careful consideration and, if accepted, are paid for at good rates.

Dairymaid is published quarterly by the Midland Counties Dairy, Ltd., Birmingham. Copies are distributed among the firm's customers and articles should have a home interest. I have sold over a score of articles to this paper dealing with films or broadcasting. Photographic illustrations accompany most articles.

Electrical Housekeeping is published quarterly by the British Electrical Development Association Inc., 2 Savoy Hill, London, W.C.2. Each issue contains a number of articles, mostly illustrated and having some bearing on electrical matters. Thus we find *Portable Heat, Light up the Corners* and *Shade Your Lights with Buckram*.

Home Bulletin is published quarterly by Chemical and Natural Products Ltd., 3 Thames House, Queen Street Place, London, E.C.4. General articles about the home, or any of the firm's products, are used. Illustrations accompany most articles.

Home Owner is published by the Halifax Building Society, Permanent Buildings, Halifax, Yorks. All communications should be addressed to the "Publications Department". This paper offers wide scope for illustrated articles and the editor is extremely courteous. Specimen titles, taken from the pages of this magazine, are: *Maps as Decoration, New Furniture for Old* and *Preparing for Summer*.

Ivory Castles is published by D. & W. Gibbs Ltd. (makers of toothpaste), Green Bank, London, E.1., and is circulated each term among teachers, scout-masters, guide mistresses, and so on. Scope here is limited, but contributions are considered if in keeping with the general policy.

Progress is published quarterly by Lever Brothers, Port Sunlight, "in the interests of the Company and its Members, Customers, and Staff". The greater part of this magazine is taken up with staff or company news, but space is also given to articles having some bearing on the firm's products. An example is, *Soap*

in Two Great Victorian Exhibitions. Photographic illustrations appear on nearly every page.

Real Companion is published quarterly by Ardente, manufacturers of aids for the deaf, 309 Oxford Street, London, W.1. Most of the articles in this are illustrated and have some bearing on hearing. Thus we find, *Too Much Noise*, *Baby Broadcasts—From Cot to Kitchen* and *Summer Time is Danger Time*.

Reel News is a monthly published in the interests of The British Thread Mills Ltd. Contributions should be sent to The Keystone Advertising Service Ltd., 12 Regent Street, London, S.W.1. In a letter the editor says, "We are always pleased to consider articles of a suitable nature which might be of semi-technical or general interest, but connected, in some way or other with the subject of sewing cotton and thread". An example is, *The Great Needle Mystery*.

Spillers' Dog Journal is published quarterly by Spillers Ltd., 40 St. Mary Axe, London, E.C.3., and is an excellent market for well-illustrated articles of a doggy interest. Here are one or two examples, *Dog Detectives*, *Give your Dog his Playtime*, and *Brave Dogs I have Met*.

U.Y.C. Outlook is published monthly by the United Yeast Co., Ltd., Unecol House, 238-240 City Road, London, E.C.1. The greater part of this magazine is given up to trade articles and recipes, but the editor is always pleased to see articles dealing with salesmanship, goodwill, advertising, and so on. *Bringing the Customer Back* and *Opportunities for Business Partnerships* are specimen titles.

Voice is published monthly by His Master's Voice,

98-108 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.1. The policy and objects of *Voice* are: (1) To provide an easily read channel for authoritative statements on "His Master's Voice" policy; (2) To give and to exchange new ideas for increasing sales; and (3) To give news concerning dealers as interestingly as possible. Photographs are welcomed. In a letter the editor states, "I shall be only too pleased to give consideration to any manuscripts you send to us".

Wheatsheaf is published monthly by the Co-operative Society, Balloon Street, Manchester, 4. Illustrated articles of a general nature are considered, preferably dealing with literature, the arts, or travel.

Wideawake is published quarterly by Battersby & Co., Ltd., hat manufacturers, Nicholl Square, London, E.C.1., "in the interests of the Customers and Employees of Battersby & Co., Ltd."

I have not included, in the above list, the several magazines published by motor-car manufacturers, although these are, strictly speaking, House Journals. These include, *Austin Magazine*, *Bedford Transport Magazine*, *Ford Times*, *Morris Owner*, *Popular Motoring*, *Standard Car Review*, *Transport Efficiency*, and *Vauxhall Motorist*. Copies of any of these can be purchased from any newsagent, and the editors of all of them give careful consideration to general articles likely to interest the motorist.

Neither have I included the two railway magazines, although these, too, are really House Journals. They are:

G.W.R. Magazine, General Manager's Office, Paddington Station, London, W.2.

L.M.S. Magazine, Euston House, London, N.W.1.

Trade Journalism

‘NO section of the Press is so badly served as the trade Press.’’

“Few aspiring free-lance journalists realize that the easiest market in which to earn odd shillings and half-crowns—which in the aggregate can be quite as welcome as occasional guineas—is the trade Press. While trade papers are not actually short of material, they are all crying out for reliable correspondents, and the free-lance who is alive can make a fairly steady income from easily picked-up paragraphs, with a good sprinkling of specials and interviews.”

These statements are taken from articles which have appeared recently in *World's Press News*, and my own experience testifies to the truth of them. In fact, I have gone so far as to state, in an article, that “it is my belief that any writer who can work up a connexion with a dozen or so papers, published in the interests of various trades, can make a comfortable living. And it is by no means as difficult to work up such a connexion as one may suppose!”

Any trade of any standing has its own paper—or papers. Thus, *Baker and Confectioner* and *Bakers' Record* cater for the baking trade; *Men's Wear* and *Outfitter* for the outfitting trade; *Grocer's Review* and *Grocer and Oil Trade Review* for the grocery trade; and so on.

What are the chief requirements of trade Press editors?

First and foremost, they want news—news of any

kind connected with persons engaged in the trade covered, particulars of building schemes, new branches, advertising campaigns, and so on.

News connected with persons covers a wide field and includes deaths, weddings, police court reports, civic activities, staff changes, presentations, changes of proprietorship, and so on.

How can news of this kind be obtained?

I will let you into a secret! Until you become known as an accredited correspondent (and are thus able to call regularly on the heads of the various businesses covered, and get your information first hand) you will find that many useful news items can be picked up from your local paper.

Here are two illustrations. The first is a news story which I sold to the *Bakers' Record*. It appeared under the title *St. Ives Firm Fined*, and the sub-title *Managing Director's Protest*.

"A second summons within a few months for inefficient brakes on a van led to a fine of £5 being imposed on H. G. Stiles, Ltd., St. Ives, Hunts, in the Cambridge Police Court on Thursday, 8th August.

"The driver of the van, Frank Furniss Braybrook, was summoned for using the van and fined 10s.

"P.C. Wolf, in his evidence, stated that he saw the van being unloaded on 27th July outside Stiles' premises in Sidney Street. As the driver pulled trays of cakes from the van the vehicle moved, although the hand-brake was full on. Witness formed the opinion that the brakes were not efficient, and said that a test would have to be made.

"At a speed of 30 miles an hour the foot-brake

pulled up the van in 58 feet; the hand-brake stopped it in 247 paces.

"In cross-examination, the driver stated that he did not examine the brake before setting out on the journey.

"Henry George Stiles, managing director of Stiles Ltd., said that at the beginning of the week in which the test was made the van had been to a garage to have the brakes adjusted. The garage people had told him the hand-brake was not as efficient as it might be, but was safe enough to rely on. New parts were needed, and these were being obtained. The van was going back to the garage to have these fitted as soon as they arrived.

"Mr. Stiles protested against the time the test took. He thought the police might have allowed the driver time to proceed to the Mill Road shop to deliver confectionery before the test was carried out."

The second appeared in a paper for the cinema trade, under the heading *Newmarket's New Cinema*.

"It is doubtful whether the life of Newmarket has ever been more thoroughly represented, on a social occasion, than at the opening of the new Doric Cinema and Café on 1st March.

"The opening ceremony was performed by Mr. D. Grafton Pryor, chairman of the Newmarket Urban District Council, and those supporting him on the stage included Mr. Ralph W. Wolsey, manager of the cinema, and Mr. Edgar Simmons, chairman and architect of the company.

"The Doric has a seating accommodation of 1200, and the stage, which is fitted with an excellent set

of curtains, is equipped for every type of theatrical production. Free cloakrooms have been provided, and there are special seats with microphone apparatus for deaf people. Attached to the cinema and café is a car park, under the supervision of a responsible attendant.

"The opening programme consisted of the films, *Good Morning, Boys*, *The Gay Adventure*, *Gaumont-British News* and a Mickey Mouse colour cartoon."

Two important points to notice about these reports are that each is crammed with facts, and each contains a good sprinkling of names. Trade Press reports are like newspaper reports in this respect. With regard to the first, note particularly the managing director's protest. It is this which gives the item its value. Ordinary everyday police court reports are of little interest to an editor. If, however, someone connected with the case has something interesting to say, or an interesting point arises, *then* the report becomes valuable to him.

Reports of meetings, as given in the local press, are also worth watching and not infrequently they provide material for trade papers.

The following, which I sold to *World's Press News*, is an example. It was given the title *University Journalism*.

"The motion before the Cambridge University Union Society, at their last meeting, was 'that this House would welcome some check upon the journalistic enthusiasm of this University'. The motion was lost by 25 votes, 29 voting for and 64 against.

"Proposing the motion, Mr. R. Gibson, of Gonville

and Caius, declared that too much journalism in the University tended to divert the attention of Members from the appeal to the ear which was, after all, still one of the great appeals of literature.

"He deplored the fact that University journalism had strayed far away from the admirable type of journalism of the latter part of the last century, when editors enjoyed the respect of their readers and could say what they liked. The influence which advertisers are able to exert on the Press to-day was, he felt, regrettable, and it was due to the scramble for advertising revenue that the University papers had fallen so much below the old standard.

"In his reply Mr. J. M. Simonds, of Magdalene, remarked that it was undoubtedly bad for a University to have a poor magazine, but that it was infinitely worse to have no magazine at all. He thought the purpose of a magazine was twofold—first to produce material which would interest the University, and secondly, to provide a medium in which those who wished might write.

"Referring more definitely to the motion, he argued that there were already checks on journalistic enthusiasm in the University, and that the inability to produce a cheap magazine without advertising revenue was one of them.

"Mr. G. T. Hesketh, of Trinity, expressed the opinion that there were at present too many University papers, which probably accounted for the poorness of some of their contributions.

"Mr. V. H. H. Green, of Trinity Hall, said that University journals, however bad, were examples of

enterprise and sound endeavour, and as such he welcomed them.

“Mr. N. E. W. Sutton, of Corpus Christi, thought that the primary function of a University paper was to entertain, and he could not feel that any influence it might exercise was likely to be great owing to the judgments of the writers being immature.”

The best way for a beginner to break into the trade Press is, I think, by submitting items similar to those given above as examples. When submitting an item, enclose a letter asking if the editor has a representative in your district and, if not, whether you could act as such for him. Few trade papers, if any, are represented in every district, and it will probably not be long before you are able to link up your services with several of them.

Do not make the fatal mistake of thinking that you can act for two papers covering the same trade. If you attempt to do this, it will not be long before you are acting for neither.

As soon as you get authority from an editor, to act as local correspondent, have some visiting cards printed with your name on and the name of the paper you represent. These will serve as a useful introduction to persons connected with the trade covered. The next thing to do is to see as many of these persons as possible, tell them you are representing such and such a paper, and ask them to give you any information which might be of interest to the editor. You may not strike much oil at first, but continue to pay occasional visits (at respectable intervals) and as you get known you will find your lineage increasing.

Some editors allow—and even encourage—their local correspondents to become subscription agents. This means that you leave a voucher copy of the paper with any member of the trade, who is not a subscriber, and if a subscription order follows you receive a percentage of it (usually 25 per cent.). An agent usually receives, as well, a percentage on all renewals. Once you obtain a subscriber to a paper, therefore, you may draw a commission in respect of his subscription over a number of years.

Earlier on in this section I pointed out that what the trade paper editor requires, first and foremost, is news. This is true and I have endeavoured to show how any enterprising free-lance can meet this demand.

News, however, is not the only requirement. Every trade paper publishes a number of special features and these are more often than not the work of local correspondents. Ideas for such features usually come when chatting with persons in the trade. For instance, Mr. Blank may tell you he is about to open a new Branch. “And that,” he adds proudly, “is the third within four years. Ten years ago I had that tiny shop in So-and-so Street. After a couple of years I moved here, and when the new Branch is opened I shall have four shops in the County.”

“A jolly fine achievement, Mr. Blank,” you reply (that is, if you have your wits about you!). “To what, chiefly, do you think you owe your success?”

If Mr. Blank is the man he usually is he won't be long before he satisfies you on this point, and when you have shaken him warmly by the hand, and got home again, it won't take you long to dash off a

thousand or two words telling exactly why he is so successful in business. The result will be a first-class feature which will sell at sight to the editor of the paper covering Mr. Blank's trade.

Sometimes you can pick up an idea in connexion with one trade which can be adapted to two or three others. This means that if you are representing more than one paper you may be able to sell an article on the same subject to each of them.

One day when you are calling on Mr. Blank, for instance, he may just be approving a new lighting arrangement. Mr. Blank has pronounced views on lighting and is keen to air his views. You listen carefully to what he has to say and later prepare a special dealing with the part lighting can play in the trade followed by Mr. Blank. Use of this idea does not end here, however. When you call on persons connected with other trades you can collect their views, and thus prepare specials for other papers.

The rate of payment for paragraphs and special articles is not high, but once you get a connexion they are easy to write. News is usually paid for at so much a printed line, varying from 1*d.* to 2½*d.* Special articles command from one guinea to two guineas a thousand words.

Most trade paper editors welcome illustrations and if you are a camera-journalist you can add considerably to your income by supplying pictures with your news paragraphs or special articles. These are usually paid for at the rate of 7*s.* 6*d.* each, but some papers are in the habit of paying 10*s.* 6*d.*

Get photographs—preferably head and shoulders—

of as many business executives as you can, and file them away so that you can find any particular one at short notice. Once you have got a fair-sized collection you will find it will provide you with a steady income. Photographs of this kind can be used to illustrate all kinds of paragraphs and will be welcomed by most editors.

Shop windows are also worth careful consideration. If you can secure some good pictures and can write interesting captions for them of between 50 and 80 words, they are almost certain to sell. It is not easy, however, to get good pictures of window displays. Here are one or two tips which may help you.

In the first place it is necessary to bear in mind that it is seldom possible to get good pictures of windows which are crammed full of goods. You must not forget that a camera views the whole window at once. This is altogether different from viewing it bit by bit—as is the case when we go shop gazing. It is a good plan, therefore, to stand well back from a window and examine it critically from that position before exposing a plate. You will then realize how desirable it is to select windows which have been dressed boldly and simply.

One of the chief annoyances, in window photography, is the reflection of outside objects on the surface of the glass. It is seldom possible to eliminate all these, but you will find that most of them are cut out if you can tackle the window when it has a fair coating of dust, or when it is drying after a shower. Sometimes you can cut out reflections by moving your position to right or left. At other times you can effect the same change by moving farther back, or by selecting

a higher viewpoint. If reflections trouble you it is a good plan to experiment freely until you have found the best possible position.

You will naturally find there are more reflections when it is sunny than when it is dull. If possible, then, select a dull day for your work. If you still cannot get a picture to your liking try an exposure by the light of the window illuminations at night.

The colour of the display will affect your choice of plate or film and a good deal of attention should be given to this point. You may have to bring colour filters into play as well.

Although it is, of course, possible to get good snapshots of a window display, you are more likely to get first-class results if you use a tripod and spend a little time getting your pictures properly focused on a screen.

Revising

IT is said of one famous author that he invariably writes a complete work ten times. Several others never think of sending a manuscript to a publisher until they have rewritten it two or three times. These, of course, are fiction writers, and although it is not necessary for the writer of articles to spend as much time over his work as this, it is none the less important that he should send his manuscripts out in as perfect a form as possible.

A publisher once astounded me by saying that at least twenty per cent of the manuscripts he received would be worthy of further consideration—*if only they had been carefully revised.*

It is always a good plan to write a complete article at one sitting, while the idea and facts are fresh in the mind. Do not stop to alter sentences or phrases, but write straight through to the end. When you have finished, do not read the manuscript through but put it on one side for two or three days. Then take it up, read it, and revise it. You will be surprised how easy it is to improve a manuscript if you follow this practice.

When you revise look particularly for clumsy sentences, unnecessary adjectives, sentences ending with a preposition, and grammatical errors. Make sure, also, that your articles contain no padding and that all the sentences are easy to read.

It is a very good plan, when you come to the revision of an article, to read it aloud. It is strange, but true, that this enables one to spot the flaws more easily and more quickly.

If you have to make more than a few minor alterations to a manuscript, retype it. It is not wise to send it to an editor if there are alterations in nearly every other line. This may seem needless advice, but I have seen manuscripts which have been well nigh impossible to read owing to the many alterations made in ink.

Think in Series

A LITTLE while ago I contributed an article to *World's Press News* entitled, "Think in Series". It advised writers not to put all their facts into a single article, if there were sufficient to make the writing of a series worth while.

It is an excellent plan to "think in series". I have always tried to do this and know that my income from writing has been appreciably higher in consequence. It requires little intelligence to grasp the fact that the income from a series is considerably larger than that from a single article.

I encouraged this "thinking in series" habit right at the commencement of my career and owe much of my later success to it. My first real "break", for instance, was in the form of a series. I have already told how the editor of *Chums* commissioned eight articles entitled *Chats About Your Camera*, and then followed up this commission with an order for nine more. I might easily have written one general article on the subject, of about 1000 words, and received a couple of guineas for it, and there the matter would have ended. As it was I was able to see seventeen of my articles in print and received a guinea a week for as many weeks.

On another occasion I suggested a series on *Cinema Secrets* to the editor of *Red Letter*. This ran for several weeks and when it came to an end the editor herself suggested I should write a further series on *Stage Effects*. For these two series I netted a sum running well into two figures. Yet I might easily have confined my first idea to one long article and thus lost the chance of the second series as well as receiving only a small part of the remuneration received as a result of the first series.

How do you set about selling a series? Obviously by means of a preliminary letter.

Directly you have an idea and have fixed on your

market, plan your articles according to the number of facts at your disposal. Send this plan, together with a carefully worded preliminary letter, to the editor of the paper you have in mind. If you feel disposed to prepare a specimen article, so much the better; I think this practice is to be commended. A specimen article gives the editor an idea of your capabilities, for even if the title and subject-matter appeal, he may be dubious about giving you an actual commission if he has no knowledge of your style.

Naturally, before you suggest a series you must be sure you have sufficient facts to fill the necessary number of articles. If you have not sufficient facts, wait until you have collected more.

Let me remind you here that you are as much a salesman as a man who deals in ordinary goods. If you bear this in mind you will not easily fall into the trap of padding articles with useless words. What would you think of a greengrocer who sold you a pound of potatoes, each potato of which was covered with thick mud? You wouldn't go back and buy a bushel from him. The same thing applies to articles. If your facts are hidden in "mud" the editor won't be interested—and he certainly won't come back for more!

Even your facts out. Do not put all the best into the first two or three articles so that the remaining ones become thin and comparatively uninteresting. Great care must be taken in the mapping out of a series, and in the even distribution of the facts at your disposal.

Sometimes it is possible to work out a series on a

particular subject and sell each article in the series to a different paper.

Let me explain what I mean.

Some time ago I was sitting in my barber's chair, having my hair trimmed, when I began to think, "Why do I come here to get a haircut? In what way does this particular barber appeal to me?" Thinking along these lines I built up in my mind a short article under the title *Why I Like My Barber*. When I got home I typed it out and sent it to the editor of *Hairdressers' Weekly Journal*. It appealed to him and he published it.

I thought then, "What is good enough for one trade may be good enough for several others." So I began to map out a series of articles on the same subject, but appealing to different trades. *Why I Like My Butcher* sold to *Meat Trades' Journal*; *Why I Like My Outfitter* to *Men's Wear*; *Why I Like My Chemist* to *Chemist and Druggist*; and so on.

Once you get an idea it is fairly easy to write and sell a series of this kind to the trade Press.

What is News?

MANY free-lance writers overlook the fact that the chief requirement of the editor of a newspaper is NEWS. He may devote some of his space to general articles, Home Page articles or juvenile features, but what he is mostly concerned about is NEWS.

What is news?

News is something which happens NOW; and until you realize this you will never make money from

the submission of news items. That which happened *yesterday* holds little interest for an editor *to-day*. Unless, therefore, you can get a news item to an interested editor within a few hours of the event occurring, it is not worth while wasting time on it. (In a later section I shall show how to submit news items before their topicality has been lost.)

Another thing about news is that it tells of something out of the ordinary. There is an old saying in editorial circles which goes like this: "If a dog bites a man, that's nothing; but if a man bites a dog, that's news."

Local News

NEWS falls into two groups: (1) Local News; (2) National News. In this section we concern ourselves with Local News.

Most of the news which appears in any local paper is either the work of members on the regular staff, or of recognized district correspondents. It is easy to understand that an old established paper (and this covers ninety per cent of the local papers of this country) has all districts covered by reliable correspondents, and misses very little in the way of important local news. You will not find it easy, therefore, to get your work accepted, and you may often send in items which have already been covered by staff reporters. Do not let this discourage you. Keep pegging away until you begin to see some of your work in print. It will be easier after that!

Obviously, if you are to meet with any success at

all, you must keep away from the big events. These are *certain* to be covered by staff men.

To begin with, ferret out some minor news stories—stories which are scarcely important enough to warrant the attention of a staff reporter. Concentrate on these and, if possible, send contributions regularly. Your first few efforts may not appear, but after a time the editor is certain to take notice of your work, and if he finds it can be relied upon he will begin to use it, and will, in time, come to value you as a regular contributor.

One of my friends, who has been the editor of two local papers, has told me about some of his early experiences. This is a suitable place to introduce them.

There are two or three ways, he says, in which a free-lance may attack the local paper. He started, as a full-time free-lance, by taking Wednesday off and scouring the district for out-of-the-way information. When he had gathered it, he pledged the secretaries of certain clubs to keep their activities secret except to him. They agreed.

He sent the result of his day's work to the county paper, together with a neatly typed letter suggesting that he become their district correspondent. The editor (for once!) agreed with him, and every Wednesday after that he took a "day off".

That is one opening. Again, he narrowed his field of activity somewhat and interviewed the chief librarian of his town. The result was a splendid and interesting article such as had never appeared before. He sent it to the town paper—with success.

The town, he discovered after some time, contained

many memories of great men. Another article on this subject followed, which was also printed.

He was beginning to get known locally, while not neglecting his work for the national press. Yet he felt this was not enough, so he dabbled in local politics.

He made a hobby of writing letters to the press. Sunday afternoons invariably found him in the garden sketching out some new plan for the betterment of the town. At first those letters were cut, but as he became known he had more and more space accorded him.

Many a time he was told that he was wasting his efforts, but he persevered and followed the policy he had mapped out for himself. Somehow or other he *had* to gain experience. At any rate, that is how he looked at it. He *had* to work inside a newspaper office—once the chance was given him he knew he could make good.

It took him eight months to do it, and then he was asked to become a reporter on a newspaper and to cover a new district. He accepted the position and worked as he had never worked before. He simply thrust himself to the top of the front page with all the audacity he could command, and then lay shivering in bed on press night wondering what the proprietor would say.

But it worked! And the name that he had made by submitting stuff for little or no remuneration stood him in good stead. When he signed an article people no longer asked, "Who is he?" Instead they exclaimed, "Ah, this is the fellow who suggested our branch libraries—so he's writing for this paper now!"

Before leaving the subject of Local News there are one or two important points I would ask you to bear in mind. They are these:

1. *Be as brief as you can.* There is no room in a newspaper for wordy reports. Give the plain facts and nothing more. Your matter will never appear if it is twice the length it should be.

2. *Be accurate.* This is *very* important. If you slip up on only one small point hundreds of readers will write to the editor and tell him of the mistake. (Some people go through every issue of a newspaper with a microscope—or so it would appear!). If this should happen often it is natural that an editor will cease to take an interest in your work.

3. *Be careful of names.* Names, in a local paper, are sometimes more important than news. People often buy a paper just to see their name in print. Make sure every name you send is spelt correctly, and take care not to designate a "Miss" as "Mrs.", and *vice versa*. Also, be careful not to leave any name out—however unimportant. This is a serious offence.

4. *Do not criticize harshly.* If you have to criticize at all, be kind. Readers of local newspapers seldom appreciate plain speaking.

5. *Submit your items promptly.* As soon as you have covered an event write up your report and get it to the editor with as little delay as possible. Delay may sometimes mean rejection.

The payment for news items is usually about 1d. or 1½d. a line, and in most cases an account has to be rendered.

National News

THERE is a big difference between local news and national news. News stories which interest the editor of a local newspaper seldom appeal to the editor of a national newspaper. It is interesting to find, however, that it is easier for the average free-lance to sell to the latter than to the former.

If you are to be successful in this field there is one very important point to bear in mind. It is just this: SPEED ALONE COUNTS. If you are the first to send the news, yours will be the item to be used—always providing, of course, you are able to give most of the facts.

News items submitted to the daily press need not be confined to events in your own district. Wherever you are you can keep an eye open for news.

It is interesting to note, however, that, although you may be constantly on the look-out for news it is often possible, when you find yourself mixed up in an accident, or similar event, to forget the news value until it is too late. I well remember helping to drag two dying men from an aeroplane which had crashed between Baldock and Royston. In my pocket I had a loaded camera and never once thought of taking a picture. The following morning a picture of the wrecked machine only, filled a whole page in the *Daily Mirror*. And I could have taken a photograph, packed with human interest, within a few minutes of the accident!

The kind of news item required by the daily and

Sunday newspapers is summed up in a circular letter sent to correspondents by the News Editor of the *Daily Express*. This letter states:

“We are prepared to consider short topical, human interest stories, running from 150 to 250 words; interesting agricultural and scientific items; spectacular accidents and fatalities, and news of all happenings of national importance.”

The hints given in the previous section, regarding the writing up of news items for local papers, hold good for the nationals—except that which suggests you should not criticize harshly. Names of persons and places are *very* important, and the more of these you can give the better.

If you cannot obtain names in any other way, make a courteous inquiry at the Police Station. Police officials are usually willing to help the *bona fide* free-lance. In the case of accidents, names which cannot be obtained from the Police can often be secured by putting through a telephone call to the Hospital.

When a news event you are trying to cover is of outstanding interest, take the names of one or two witnesses and get them to tell you what they know about it. Instead of a brief news report you can then send in a longer story, packed with human interest.

When writing about a fire endeavour to find out how it originated, who discovered it, the number and names of any persons in the building when it started, names of the injured, and the estimated cost of the damage.

Do not overlook the fact that you can submit the same news story to any number of newspapers. There

is no need even to rewrite it. If, however, you are fortunate enough to get hold of a news item of outstanding importance, and you are sure none of the newspapers has it, make it an exclusive story. Offer it to one News Editor only and tell him it is exclusive. You will then receive a much higher rate of payment—and will go up several places in the editor's estimation.

How to submit News

WE have seen that news items are useless, from a national point of view, unless they are sent in quickly. There are three satisfactory ways of doing this: (1) by telephone; (2) by telegram; (3) by train.

If you happen to be on the spot when an accident occurs, or a fire is discovered, or something else exciting takes place, do not lose a *second* in getting together as many facts about it as possible. As soon as you have collected these facts make your way to the nearest telephone box, ring up the papers one after another, ask for the News Editor, and give your facts briefly and clearly. Finish with your name and address.

Before you start to 'phone have your message ready. It is best to jot it down on a piece of paper so that you can read it off. If the News Editor is interested he will put you through to a stenographer who will take your story down as you read it.

You may find that the first paper you ring already has the story (newspapers collect their news very quickly), but if you know you have lost no time in covering the event, do not let this deter you from trying another paper.

A short time ago I was passing a cinema in Cambridge when I saw a crowd of undergraduates outside, who were evidently in a hostile mood. It is not necessary here to give full details of the incident, but suffice it to say that some of their fellow college members inside the cinema had given them offence. As these luckless fellows emerged they were seized and carried towards the river. I remained in the midst of the disturbance until I had sufficient facts for a story and then broke away and raced for a telephone box. The first paper I made contact with was the *Daily Mail*—only to find that some news hound had beaten me! I decided to try one more paper and got through to the *Daily Express*. I was in time here and my story was taken and published. I next got through to *Daily Herald* and then to *News Chronicle*. Both of these also accepted the story and made use of it. These four calls having taken nearly an hour I decided to leave it at that. When payment for the various items came through, however, I found I had netted over £3 for my evening's work.

Another personal experience worth relating, in connexion with the submission of news items by telephone, is the following.

I received details of a motor-cycle accident, from a second party, shortly after it had happened. Two undergraduates were involved in the accident and both had lost their lives. I thought it might possibly be a little too late to send the news to London, but decided to try the *Evening News*. When I got through to the News Editor, and gave the facts, he informed me that details of the accident had already reached him. "We

know everything," he said, "with the exception of the name of the pillion rider. Can you give us that?" Fortunately I could and for this information alone I received a cheque for 10s. 6d.

Sometimes it is better and cheaper to submit news by the second method—that is, by telegram. At all Head Post Offices you can send what are known as Press Telegrams. These allow 60 words for 1s. up to 6 p.m., and 80 words for 1s. after 6 p.m.

Another useful thing to know is that if you send the same wording to more than one address, in the same town or postal district, the charge for each telegram after the first is only fourpence. Here is what the *Post Office Guide* says about this service:

"A telegram will be delivered at two or more addresses in the same free delivery on prepayment of the ordinary telegram charges for the total number of words in the addresses and text in addition to a charge of fourpence for every copy beyond the first. Each address must be complete in itself. Each London Postal District, for example the District called 'South-Western', is regarded for the purpose as forming a separate delivery; and when a multiple address telegram for London is directed to one or more registered abbreviated addresses the District initials must be inserted after each registered address, but need not be paid for. The Postal District numbers appropriate for letters are not required."

An example of a news story submitted by telegram is the following:

On one occasion I heard of a stranger who walked into two or three shops and changed pound notes for

silver. He was careful to get all shillings, if possible, and when he had them he walked along the street and gave one to every child he met. Asked why he was doing it, he said it was his birthday. I wrote this incident up in the form of a Press Telegram and sent it to four dailies. Three of them used it.

The third method—that of sending news by train—need only be resorted to when the story is accompanied by photographs. Pack manuscript and photographs (or negatives) together and hand them in at the Parcels Office. They will then be put on the next passenger train. Do not forget to send a wire, or 'phone message, to the editor, telling him they are on the way, and giving the time of dispatch, and he will then have them collected.

When you have a news item published it is advisable to send in an account. The proper way to make this out is to give date of issue, title of contribution, page and column, and number of lines. Leave the accounts department to fill in the amount.

If any expenses have been incurred in collecting or submitting the story, detail these on a separate sheet. I have found that sometimes these are settled with the payment for the news item, and sometimes separately.

If ever you are *asked* by an editor to go in search of copy, and expenses are incurred, send in an account for these whether you are successful in your search or not.

The other day the editor of the *Daily Express* rang me up and asked me to get him a photograph of a certain lady who had figured in a Police Court case

earlier in the day. Unfortunately her complete address was not known and I was unable to trace her. In an endeavour to do so, however, I spent 3s. 6d. on telephone calls. I sent in my account for this amount and, although I did not succeed in getting what the editor wanted, I eventually received a cheque for 14s., being 10s. 6d. for "efforts re picture", and 3s. 6d. for "expenses".

News by Letter Post

THE fact that I have laid so much stress on *speed*, where the submission of news is concerned, does not necessarily mean that the letter post can *never* be used. On the contrary, I have made many guineas from items submitted in this way. By letter post, however, one can only submit items which do not date—at least, for a few days.

Here are two items of news, submitted by myself, which indicate the kind of story which can be sent by post.

The first appeared in the *Sunday Times* and was headed, *Relic of Old Cambridge*.

"The licence of the Three Tuns Inn, on Castle Hill, Cambridge, has expired, thus severing one of the few remaining links with Dick Turpin.

"The highwayman when passing through Cambridge always slept at this inn, occupying a special bedroom at the rear of the house. The room was destroyed about 30 years ago.

"In the possession of Mr. R. E. Rutter, a local antiquary, is a letter, dated 1739, signed by the then

host of the Three Tuns, telling how he came into possession of certain effects belonging to the highwayman. These effects were acquired by Mr. Rutter and in the lining of one of them, a velvet coat, he found a George I half-crown, silver and copper coins dated 1711 and 1732, silver earrings and golden and silver rings, believed to be proceeds from some of the highwayman's robberies.

"It is widely supposed that the same inn was the one frequented by Samuel Pepys, and referred to in his Diaries as the place where he drank many healths to the King.

"Those who know Cambridge and the Diaries well, however, will have no difficulty in connecting the Three Tuns referred to and frequented by Pepys with the inn of the same name standing on Market Hill.

"It was from the same inn that Mrs. Woodcock set out in 1799 on her adventurous journey to her home at Impington. Local history states that she was overtaken by a snowstorm and spent eight days in a snow-drift before being rescued, still alive."

The second appeared in the *Daily Mirror*. It was headed *Tramps in Clover*.

"An old cottage near Cambridge has been converted by Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Spalding, Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress, into a cosy Wayfarers' Rest for men on their way to the institution.

"Women helpers welcome the wayfarers, and after tea and a scone each is given a cigarette. An upstairs room has been transformed into a chapel, and before the Rest is closed for the day a short service is held for all who care to attend.

"Games can be played and provision is also made for any who desire to write. They may give the Rest as an address for letters.

"Shortly it is hoped to provide each wayfarer with a set of boot-mending tools."

If you study your newspaper carefully you will frequently come across items like these. They can be divided roughly into two classes: (1) Items which appeal because the facts given in them have a wide general interest; (2) Items which appeal because they describe something new or uncommon.

You will see that the first example given above falls into the first class—everyone has heard of Dick Turpin, and Castle Hill, Cambridge, is well known to thousands of people; and the second example falls into the second class—the opening of a Rest for wayfarers is something quite new.

Any item which falls into one of these classes is worth submitting. Sometimes an item falls into both; acceptance, then, is almost certain.

Ideas for news items such as these can often be gleaned from local papers. An interview, or a short conversation on the telephone, will quickly provide you with a few additional facts, and the report can be written up with little delay. As a matter of fact, one of the examples given above was made possible in this way.

Another idea I picked up from a local paper had to do with the tinkers' tools used by John Bunyan. I discovered they were in the possession of a man living at Royston. A news story about these, of nearly half a column in length, was printed in the *Evening Standard*.

In connexion with these reports I have, you will see, mentioned a daily newspaper (*Daily Mirror*), an evening newspaper (*Evening Standard*), and a Sunday newspaper (*Sunday Times*). I have done this to show that the editors of all the national newspapers are interested in items of this kind, and are open to accept them.

You need not confine an item to one newspaper; you can, if you like, send the same wording to two or three. This I advise. If you send to one only it may not be used and your time will have been wasted. If you send to two or three, however, one, at least, may find room for it.

The item dealing with Bunyan's tools was sent to *Evening Standard*, *Evening News* and *Star*—but only the *Evening Standard* used it; on the other hand, that dealing with the Wayfarers' Rest was sent to four morning papers and *three* of them used it. With further reference to this it is interesting to note here that, although the same wording was sent to each, the same story did not appear in each.

This is how it was published in the *News Chronicle*.

"A rest cottage for tramps has been opened at Cambridge by the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress, Mr. and Mrs. Alex. Spalding, and their friends.

"Tramps do not always time their arrival at the casualty wards at opening time. Now they can take refuge in the cottage, which is open daily, except Sundays, from four till six.

"Visitors are given tea, a scone and a cigarette. Papers and writing material are provided.

"The average number of visitors is about ten a day.

"An upstairs room has been converted into a small chapel, where short voluntary services are held."

Sending News Pictures

THE chief reason why free-lance photographers do not see more of their news pictures in the national newspapers is probably because they fail to realize how important is the time factor. An event ceases to be news, as far as an Art Editor is concerned, unless pictures of it are in his hands within a few hours.

I can hear many readers saying, "Yes, I appreciate this, but how can I be expected to satisfy such a condition when I am living 50 miles from London?" Others are probably saying, "It is out of the question, as far as I am concerned, for I do neither my own developing nor my own printing."

I would reply at once that it is as easy for an amateur living 50 miles from London, and having only a cheap camera and with no experience of dark-room work at all, to get news pictures accepted by national newspapers as it is for an experienced photographer living within easy reach of London, and having immediate access to dark-room equipment.

My own experience proves this.

Let me detail one example.

A friend called to tell me he had just seen an interesting car accident, about six miles from where I live, and wondered if it was worth photographing. (It is a good plan, by the way, to train one's friends to take an interest in possible news pictures).

I motored out to the accident and found that a small

Morris car had skidded on a bend, crashed into a telegraph post and caused the latter to break off about half-way up. The top half was suspended over the middle of the road and kept from crashing by the telegraph wires, which were still intact. The front of the car was badly smashed, but the driver had escaped serious injury. I had a film pack camera with me and took eight pictures from different angles.

Returning home I looked up the trains—I live over 50 miles from London—and found that the next one left in a little under an hour. I then rang through to the Art Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, told him I was putting an undeveloped film pack on the so-and-so train, and asked him to have it met. This he did, and the next morning one of my pictures appeared on the back page of the paper. It was, in fact, the only picture on that page.

In due course my developed negatives were returned, together with a cheque for 17s. 6d. for the picture published.

In this case, however, remuneration did not end here. A firm which specializes in the making of steel poles saw the picture and got in touch with me, through the *Daily Mirror*, asking for a copy of the picture and permission to use it for advertising purposes. I sent a whole-plate enlargement and charged 12s. 6d. for the use of it. Later I wrote an article around the picture and sold it to *Exchange & Mart*. This brought me another £1.

Art Editors of all the national newspapers are always willing to collect undeveloped plates and films from trains, and develop them in the office. Thus no amateur

need hesitate about snapping a news picture when one comes his way.

There is nothing to prevent you from sending pictures of the same news event to more than one Art Editor, thus earning more than one reproduction fee. I have done this many times. In the instance detailed above, however, I was unlucky in that I had no plates for my camera, and only the one film pack and no time to get others. (Moral: Always have a supply of plates and films by you in case of emergency.)

When sending plates or films be careful to enclose your name and address and full particulars of the event covered. Give also all the necessary details regarding the plates or film. This is particularly necessary if you have been working with panchromatic material; otherwise development may be attempted in red light and the negatives ruined.

Features for Local Newspapers

EDITORS of the majority of local newspapers give space to one or two regular features and occasional—if not regular—feature articles.

It is important to bear in mind that all matter must have a definite local interest, and care must be taken to ensure its accuracy. There is always someone in a town who knows a little more about a subject than you do yourself.

As examples of the type of article local editors usually welcome one might mention the following: The history of local churches (an illustrated series); local legends; old ruins in the neighbourhood; historical

anniversaries connected with the town; interviews with residents who, at some time or other, have met with uncommon experiences; the town fifty years ago (an illustrated series showing how certain districts have altered); natives who have become famous; and so on.

Many local editors would undoubtedly be interested in regular features, if features of the right kind were suggested to them.

Here are a few ideas which have already appealed to editors, in one town or another. Maybe one of them would appeal to *your* local editor—if only you can write up an interesting specimen and convince him you can continue to supply material up to the same standard.

If you are interested in gardening, and the district in which your local newspaper circulates is a fairly rural one, you may be able to interest the editor in a weekly column of gardening notes. If you think there is a reasonable chance of your offer being accepted it may be worth your while to become a member of the Royal Horticultural Society. You can then place the letters F.R.H.S. after your name and the feature will look more authoritative.

Another feature you may like to suggest is one dealing with happenings in the local religious world. No doubt many editors would be pleased to publish a weekly column, written up in a chatty manner, dealing with authentic items of this kind. No scandal would be allowed, and you would have to see that too much space was not devoted to one particular sect, to the exclusion of others.

Another popular feature is one dealing with local

natural history. To write articles of this kind you must possess an extensive knowledge of the animals and birds in the district, as well as with places which have an antiquarian interest. Ordinary, common-place facts will not do; you must fill each article with little-known facts and personal observations.

A book column is also worth considering. If you are literary-minded you should have no difficulty in writing up a weekly column dealing with new books. Endeavour to find as many authors as you can whose life, or whose work, is connected in some way with the town in which you live. This should not be difficult, and it will give your articles a strong local interest. After the feature has been running a few weeks, and has become widely known, people in the district will begin sending you books and your task will then become a simple one.

Gossip Paragraphs

I HAVE a friend who makes a comfortable living out of paragraph writing. When he started his journalistic career in London (after working many months in the Provinces) he vowed that he would write enough paragraphs to pay for his meals.

He did this—and more.

He soon found there was a wide and varied market for paragraphs, and that payment was good. He decided to specialize in this branch of writing and did so well that eventually he was asked to edit one of the features to which he had contributed.

I mention this in order to show you that paragraph writing really is worth while.

My own introduction to this branch of writing came through an advertisement in *The Times*. I have told, elsewhere in this book, how this put me in touch with the Gossip Editor of the *Daily Mirror* and opened up a market to which I have been a fairly frequent contributor ever since.

Many writers ignore the paragraph markets because they think they are not in a position to pick up information of the kind required. This is foolish. If you only keep your ears and eyes open, and are not afraid to ask a question or two when the occasion demands it, you may often pick up material for a saleable paragraph.

Let me illustrate this by giving two examples of my own which were published in the *Daily Mirror*.

I have a friend who goes every Easter, with a party of Rover Scouts, to some place abroad. Among the places he has visited are Denmark, Austria, Italy and Czechoslovakia. When he returns from one of these trips he invariably has a number of interesting things to relate. After he had visited Vienna he told me that the police of that city were given authority to fine, on the spot, people who dropped pieces of paper, or other forms of rubbish, in the streets. This made an interesting paragraph, entitled *Fines for Litter*, which was written up and published in the following form:

"A friend who has just returned from a holiday in Vienna suggests that it would be an excellent idea if the police in England were invested with a similar

authority to that enjoyed by the police in Vienna.

"He thinks it would do much to rid the country of the detestable litter nuisance.

"He tells me that if you drop a piece of paper in the streets of Vienna you are promptly accosted by a policeman, who fines you an equivalent in Austrian money of about 1s. 2d.

"By way of receipt he hands you a small coloured slip, but if, by any chance, you should later drop this—well, it means another 1s. 2d.!"

As a second example, I would mention that some time ago I ventured into a small wood belonging to, and forming part of the estates of, Lord Ellesmere. In an incredibly short time a gamekeeper appeared and informed me there was still in existence a law against trespassing. A short conversation with him, however, resulted in his telling me of an interesting shoot which had recently taken place on the estate. It appeared that it was overrun with pigeons and Lord Ellesmere had invited a party of Cambridge undergraduates to spend a day shooting them. Linked up with the partridge shooting season this made a useful paragraph, headed *Killing Two Birds*. It read as follows:

"The first day of the annual onslaught on the partridges is due to-morrow, but the birds will enjoy a brief respite from the guns as the fateful date falls on a Sunday.

"Lord Ellesmere's estate, which is not far from Newmarket, is among those expected to provide excellent sport. Recently it was the scene of a shoot of a different kind.

"It was becoming overrun by pigeons and, since

these birds are very destructive to the crops, Lord Ellesmere invited a party of undergraduates from Cambridge to come and reduce the numbers. As a result, no fewer than 400 birds were accounted for. The visitors thoroughly enjoyed the sport, so that two birds, as it were, were killed with each successful shot!"

Sometimes it is possible to place a series of paragraphs on the same subject. A year ago I suggested a series to the Gossip Editor of the *Daily Mirror* on *Celebrities and Their Dogs*. He liked the idea and published a series which ran for three weeks. Each contribution was accompanied by a suitable photograph, and in most cases ran to two paragraphs. Here is part of the series:

Star Who Loves Dogs

"Peggy Cochrane, who has been described as the B.B.C.'s most versatile performer, is a great lover of golden retrievers.

"She has two very fine specimens, named Rex and Susan, and practically all her spare time is devoted to them and to the rearing of the healthy litters of puppies which they introduce into the Cochrane household at varying intervals.

Rex and the Violin

"When she goes on holiday Miss Cochrane invariably leaves her valuable violin in the care of her mother.

"Last summer, she tells me, she had to leave Rex

behind also and, although he hates the noise which emanates from her instrument and will not come near it when it is being played, he knew it had some definite connexion with his mistress and sat in the corner beside it, moping, the whole of the time she was away."

The material and photograph in this instance were obtained during a personal interview with Miss Cochrane. The facts and pictures for the remainder of the series, however, were obtained by means of letters.

At this point it will be interesting to note what a well-known Gossip Editor says about his general requirements. These are his observations:

"We are not looking for scandal; news about people—interesting news about people who are interesting for their own sake, is the need. We are not interested in the fact that Lady So-and-so was seen at the Ritz—she always is. We would rather learn what she planned to do during the luncheon.

"First nights, charity balls, and so on are already covered by our regular contributors. We don't want 'exclusive information' which we find later among last week's cuttings. We are not concerned solely with Society, but with everyone who plans or does something out of the ordinary. There is any amount of news about people which the news rooms of Fleet Street don't get. We want it."

Practically all the London morning, evening and weekly newspapers print a page, or less, of gossip paragraphs, and nearly all these features are open to the free-lance. No two, however, are alike, and before you can hope to be a regular contributor to any of

them you must make a careful study of those you propose to try.

When submitting paragraphs it is never necessary to enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Manuscripts are seldom returned, even if you do!

Type the paragraph neatly on one side of the paper and address it to the Gossip Editor. If it does not appear within a week or ten days you can be practically certain it is not being used.

Can you duplicate paragraphs? Yes, if you are careful to submit them in different forms. If you do duplicate try to spread your facts out. Supposing, for example, you have 5 facts—call them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5—and you wish to submit three different paragraphs. Let the first contain facts 1, 2 and 3; the second, facts 2, 4 and 5; and the third, facts 1, 3 and 5.

Many of the newspapers published in the Provinces publish a paragraph feature, but, in nearly every case, paragraphs for these must have a local interest. One of the exceptions is the *Manchester Guardian*. This paper runs a column which is called *Miscellany* and in which paragraphs of a general nature are published.

You need not live in a certain district in order to be able to submit paragraphs to newspapers which cover that district. For instance, you may live in Dover and learn that a man residing there, whose home was formerly in Sheffield, has made a record round on the local golf course. This, together with one or two other facts about the man's golf, would make an interesting paragraph for the editor of a newspaper in the home town.

Some newspapers—*Star* and *People* in particular—

run special paragraph features for sportsmen, and outside contributions are welcomed for these. *Star* pays 3s. 6d. for paragraphs of about 80 words and *People* 2s. 6d. for paragraphs of between 40 and 60 words.

Several of the weekly magazines are also worth bearing in mind. *Everybody's Weekly* and *Tit-Bits*, for instance, run paragraph features and use contributions on a variety of subjects. One comes across these features, too, in the domestic weeklies. *Home Notes* has its *Between Friends* pages, and *Home Journal* runs a paragraph feature under the heading *What's Going On—Mostly About Men and Women*.

Answers to Correspondents

USEFUL markets for paragraphs are to be found in the "Answers to Correspondents" features which appear regularly in many of the weeklies. Naturally, it is generally supposed that these answers are replies to genuine inquiries. I thought so myself until one day I suggested a short series of articles to an editor and received a reply to the effect that he was not interested in article length but would be pleased to see about a dozen paragraphs which he could use on his Correspondents page. Since then I have sold scores of these paragraphs—usually at a good price.

Here are two examples of my own which have been published. I am not mentioning the papers in which they appeared for reasons which are obvious.

1. "The laboured breathing of your rabbit, S.N. (Faversham), points to a disease known as pot-belly. If the skin of the belly is quite tight you can be sure that this is the trouble. The cause of the ailment is damp hutches and an excess of damp, green food. To effect a cure, massage the belly with soapy water. Then give a teaspoonful of lime water, to which has been added four drops of sal-ammoniac, every half-hour. The rabbit should have dry food only for several days, when it will begin to show signs of improvement."

2. "*Trousseau* really means a gift, Nellie H. (Derby), and was adopted centuries ago in order to compensate the bridegroom indirectly for the money or goods which he had to give to the bride's father to secure her purchase. At one time in England the bridegroom always examined the *trousseau* before the marriage and he would not marry until he considered it complete. In Greece at the present time the sons have to help with their sisters' *trousseau*, for they themselves are not allowed to marry until the girls of the family have each found a suitor."

The first of these examples was one of a series under the general heading, *Animal Ailments*; and the second of a series title, *Wedding Customs*. Each series contained twelve paragraphs and together they brought in four guineas. The paragraphs as printed above are exactly as I sent them. The editor expected me to add names of persons and towns of my own.

If you think yourself capable of doing work of this kind the best plan is to approach editors with a courteous letter inquiring if outside contributions for the feature are accepted.

Papers which do not contain an "Answers to Correspondents" page are worth watching, and a carefully worded letter will sometimes result in a commission to run such a feature being obtained.

Jokes and Witty Paragraphs

MANY newspapers or magazines publish either a page or so of witty paragraphs, or a selection of jokes. The majority of such features are open to the free-lance, and anyone who has a leaning towards humour should make a study of these features—particularly those composed of witty paragraphs.

The *Sunday Express* and *Sunday Pictorial*, for instance, publish 30 or more of these paragraphs in each issue, and many of them are sent in by outside contributors. I, myself, have supplied paragraphs to the former at 5s. each, which represents an attractive rate of payment considering the length.

Both these papers have been using these witty paragraphs for a number of years and will probably go on doing so for many years to come. *Humorist*, *Everybody's Weekly* and *Punch* are three magazines which have also been running a feature of this kind for a long time. That in *Punch* takes the form of witty comments attached to short news reports, and the editor likes each paragraph to contain the name of a person, place or publication.

John Bull publishes a page of brief replies to readers' letters. The feature is called *The Editor Laughs Last*, and many of the paragraphs appearing in it are the work of free-lance contributors.

Some editors, you will find, like titles for the wise-cracks they publish. It is useless sending paragraphs to these markets unless they are titled. Moreover, they must be titles with a "kick" in them. Ordinary, common-place titles are worse than none at all. In some cases the joke is in the title, and in others the title contains a humorous twist. If you want to see some good examples of such titles study the *Piccalilli* feature in the *Sunday Express*.

It is seldom wise to submit the same idea to two features at the same time, but as soon as an idea is rejected by one paper it can be *rewritten* and submitted to another. I have given emphasis to the word "rewritten". This is because it is very important. If you know the job of paragraph writing at all well, you will know that each joke feature has its own particular style and that, although the same *idea* may be suitable for all of them, there is only one way of writing it up for each particular feature. If you are a lazy writer—finding it too much trouble to rewrite anything once submitted—you had best leave the joke market alone.

Humorous paragraphs which find the readiest sale are those with a topical interest. If possible, base your jokes on outstanding news events or anniversaries. Into the latter class fall events like the Boat Race, the Budget, the Sales, Income Tax Demand time, Cup Final, Christmas, and so on.

When you submit topical paragraphs to Sunday newspapers make sure they arrive early in the week—in any case, not later than Thursday.

If you think yourself capable of writing a complete

joke feature, each week or each month, it is possible you might find an opening in one of the trade papers—particularly those published for motorists. Naturally the majority of the jokes must appeal, in some way, to members of the trade covered by the paper selected. Editors of trade papers often advertise for humorous features, and I know most of them would publish more material of this kind—if only they could get hold of it.

Another opportunity for joke writers is in connexion with humorous drawings. Few of the leading joke artists supply all their own jokes and all of them are only too pleased to receive ideas from free-lances. All you need do is to type out the joke and give a rough indication of the drawing you have in mind. If it appeals to him the artist will then work on the drawing and pay you so much for the idea. You can get in touch with these artists by writing to them care of the magazine to which they contribute. Do not forget that each artist has his own particular style and that a joke suitable for one might be useless for another.

Box Features

A BOX is a short article, enclosed in a special border of type, used generally to break up a page. Boxes often take the form of a series, but they differ from articles in an ordinary series in that they are very short. Often they do not run to more than a hundred words.

My own experience is that series of boxes command good fees. They are therefore well worth thinking

about. Some time ago I sold several such series to *Home Notes* and *Woman's Life*, and payment worked out at round about four guineas a thousand words.

One of these series appeared under the general title of *Film Fancies*. Here is one of the contributions in this series, to show how they are written up:

"Dorothy Sebastian is a great believer in mascots and lucky charms. 'I don't think they possess any evil influence,' she says, 'but I'm sure that if you have a good mascot or a good charm it is certain to bring good luck.'

"Dorothy recently adopted an old bewhiskered toad as a mascot, and now she says she is expecting lots and lots of good fortune. She doesn't know how many years old the toad is, but she is sure it's lucky because it was discovered in the ruins of a very ancient film set—probably one they built when the filming of *Ben Hur* began. 'And,' Dorothy adds with a smile, '*Ben Hur* was lucky, wasn't it?'"

If you have a really good idea it is possible to get an editor interested in a regular box feature. Readers who regularly scan the pages of the *Daily Herald* will remember the box feature which appears every day under the heading, *Says Mr. Peppercorn*. This feature has been running for years and is probably one of the most popular features in the paper. No doubt thousands of readers turn to this feature first—"just to see what Mr. Peppercorn has to say".

Editors know that a good box feature will help to maintain the circulation figures and on that account are always willing to give consideration to any ideas submitted to them.

Almost any subject is suitable for a national newspaper. *Recipes* for the Home Page; *Things to Make* for the Children's Corner; *Tips for Typists* for a Business Column; *Test Team Personalities* for the Sports Page are ideas which have already been worked on, and which will probably be worked on again.

The same ideas, in different forms, also find their way into local newspapers. What interests the local editor most, however, is a feature with a local interest.

Symposiums

SOMETIMES a series of very short articles—expressing the views, or giving the experiences, of various well-known people—can be sold in the form of a single feature. This we call a symposium.

There is money, *big* money, in this form of journalism and it is therefore a branch which should be given careful consideration.

So that you may understand exactly what a symposium is I will mention one or two examples.

Some time ago a young French lady appeared in the Strand dressed in trousers. The *Daily Mail* promptly seized on this and published a column giving the views of a number of prominent novelists and actresses on the new fashion. This column was in reality a symposium, for a symposium is, to quote the dictionary, "a collection of separate opinions on one topic".

A news interest always renders a symposium more saleable. During a controversy in Paris as to whether French schoolgirls should use cosmetics, an enter-

prising *Staffordshire Sentinel* representative made an interesting symposium by obtaining the views of local mistresses on the subject.

Many attractive symposiums may be worked up from subjects which are essentially "hardy annuals". *The Best Holiday I Have Ever Spent, Are Schooldays the Happiest?, My Best Piece of Luck* have all been done before, but many local papers would probably welcome interviews on the subject from, say, the local mayor and mayoress, one or two other prominent people in the town, and an actress appearing at the local theatre.

A few days before I sat down to write this book one of my own symposiums appeared in *Tit-Bits*, filling a page. It bore the general title, *When We Were Fooled*, and contained contributions from Tom Walls, Will Hay, Flanagan and Allen, Jack Buchanan, and Ralph Lynn. Each contribution contained between 150 and 200 words and was accompanied by a suitable photograph. (In this instance I did not supply the photographs myself; the editor obtained them from an Agency.)

It occurred to me in the first place that an article along these lines, if published round about 1st April, would not only prove attractive but would also be topical. Then I thought, "Why not a symposium? If I can get a collection of signed stories the feature will be certain to sell." So I sent a carefully worded letter to Mr. Crocombe, editor of *Tit-Bits*, and outlined my idea. A reply came back to the effect that the idea appealed and the next step was to collect some material. I drew up a list of prospects and approached

one or two in person, one or two through film publicity departments, and the remainder by letter.

Within a week or two I had sufficient material to work on and the feature was soon completed and in the hands of the editor.

Here are a few points to keep in mind when preparing symposiums.

1. *Select names with care.* The best people to go after are those at the middle of the tree—people who are gradually making a name for themselves and who are sufficiently well-known to interest the readers of a widely circulated magazine. The majority of these people, being anxious to get as much publicity as possible, will be pleased to help.

This does not mean that you should never go after the big names. If you can get them, so much the better. You will often find, however, that people who have "arrived" are either too busy to be bothered or have no inclination to help.

2. *Go after more contributions than you need.* Not everyone you approach will take the trouble to answer your letter. If, therefore, you are wanting five contributions and approach only that number of persons, you will possibly find that, after waiting several days, you have received contributions from not more than two of them. This causes a serious delay, and if your subject is a topical one the delay may result in your idea becoming worthless. It is advisable to solicit at least three more contributions than are necessary for the feature you have in hand.

3. *If the subject allows it, anticipate the opinions of those you approach.* This is not as difficult as may at

first appear. If you can compose a suitable contribution yourself, do so. Send a typed copy of this with your letter, leaving room for the signature, and in nine cases out of ten it will come back signed, with, perhaps a few minor alterations added in ink.

4. *Get all contributions signed.* This is important. Some editors will not look at contributions unless they *are* signed. Apart from this, however, you have the satisfaction of knowing that, with a signature, you are on safe ground. Some people, when they see their statements in print or have their attention drawn to them by friends, are apt to think they have been twisted or altered by the journalist or the editor. They not infrequently write to an editor and tell him so. If, however, a signed copy can be produced, further bother is saved.

5. *Always enclose stamped addressed envelopes when writing for contributions.* This, after all, is only fair. Apart from this you are more likely to get a reply.

It is possible to get the addresses of most celebrities from the London Telephone Directory (copies can be purchased, through any Exchange, at 2s. the two parts), *Who's Who*, or *Who's Who of the Theatre*.

Interviewing

I SECURED my first interview—without, let me add, any influence—when I was still in my teens. I wrote it up in 600 words and sold it to *Pearson's Weekly* for four guineas. Since then I have interviewed scores of well-known people and I cannot remember one interview which has failed to yield good results.

There is plenty of money in interviewing for any free-lance who sets about the work in a proper manner. The one thing he must not do, however, is to get over-nervous or easily discouraged. Why be nervous, anyhow? The person being interviewed is not an ogre! He won't eat you, as the saying goes! And why be discouraged? *Failure* is a word which need have no place in the vocabulary of a free-lance. No, approach your "victims" with a feeling that all men are equals, and all your interviews will produce successful results.

Yet I must admit that I felt very nervous when I made my way to the *Q Theatre* to interview a person whose name was well known throughout two Continents. It was my first experience of this type of work. Several times during the journey there I half kicked myself for being such a fool as to write and ask for the interview. And when at length I was ushered into the great star's presence my legs sagged noticeably at the knees.

Introductions were soon over, and when I was comfortably settled in the star's dressing-room she asked kindly, "And what would you like to know?"

"Well, Miss —," I began, "I had thought it would be interesting to write up the story of your beginning. . . ."

I got no further before the bomb burst. "Gracious," she exclaimed, "*that* again! It was done dozens of times, months ago!"

If I had still been standing I am sure I should have collapsed in a heap on the floor. I felt like rushing from the room without uttering another sound. Then I realized I had my own way to make and that quitting

at the first rebuff was not likely to help. So I pulled myself together and thought hard. In this way I was able to save the situation and eventually I came away with sufficient material for an article which the star later approved. After signing her name at the bottom of the copy I sent to her she added the words, "I think this is very nice."

This experience taught me a good deal and I have never been to interview a person since without first planning two distinct lines of approach in case one should meet with disapproval. That is, of course, unless a definite subject has been fixed beforehand.

A friend of mine once interviewed Jack Hylton on the subject of *Interviewing*. Here is part of what Mr. Hylton said to my friend regarding interviewers themselves:

"I do not care for the halting, hesitant types of individual. To be candid, such a person should not attempt journalistic work, for he or she does not cut much ice when interviewing.

"The bluff, hearty, too forceful man, who acts and speaks as though the person he is interviewing has known him all his life, is likely to close my mouth rather than to open it, for nobody likes to be bullied into talking.

"The man I really like is pleasant, self-possessed, keen, but, at the same time, very tactful, and my experience proves to me that the young writer who cultivates such a combination does not go unrewarded in his efforts at interview work."

The most important thing to remember about interviewing is that the person being interviewed should be

encouraged to say as much as possible. This is by no means as difficult as may at first appear. You can keep up a one-sided conversation for a very long time simply by butting in occasionally with a well-chosen question. Do not, as so many free-lances try to do, enter into a general discussion. If you do you will soon find that *you* are the person being interviewed and not the one whose views you have come to seek.

The interviewer must always start the conversation first, by means of a leading question. This gives him a slight advantage, and by sticking to questions, and not allowing himself to be drawn into arguments, he can maintain that advantage.

You have only to observe the demeanour of a police-court witness to appreciate the relatively superior position of the questioner over the person being questioned.

If you can possibly avoid it, do not use a notebook during the course of an interview. Many people will close up like an oyster when they see that everything they are saying is being taken down. It is foolish to cramp a person's style and you will get very little first-class matter if you do.

This does not mean that you should not have a notebook with you. On the contrary, you should *never* go without one. But do not use it until *after* the interview; then use it as quickly as you can. Immediately you get away write down everything connected with the interview you can possibly remember. Not only the actual words spoken but your impressions of the person himself, details of the surroundings in which you found him, and so on.

Never destroy *any* of these notes. It is surprising how often they come in handy.

When you have finished writing up your notes examine them from every possible angle. A single interview may easily result in half-a-dozen saleable articles. Let me give you an example.

I once went to Glatton to interview Beverley Nichols in the cottage which has become famous through his books, *Down the Garden Path*, *A Thatched Roof* and *Village in a Valley*. My main purpose was to get material for an article suitable for *Home Owner*. I got this material and sold the article; but in addition I was able to write an article about Mr. Nichols' dog, which sold to *Spiller's Dog Journal*; another about his free-lancing experiences, which sold in the form of an interview to *World's Press News*; another about his books, which sold to *Wheatsheaf*; a paragraph about the garden, which sold to *Home Gardening*; and three gossip paragraphs which were published on the Gossip Page of the *Daily Mirror*.

Within the last few months telephone interviews have become common, and this method has much to commend it where people who are normally busy are concerned.

It is necessary, when seeking information on the telephone, to concentrate on the voice. In a practical little book titled *Interviewing*, Mr. W. V. Noble says:

"The voice alone can be used to create an impression. By inflexion and variation of tones, the voice has to create for the person at the other end of the wire a mental picture of the interviewer, and so much can depend on that picture."

It is also necessary to control the voice. In the same book the author tells of a reporter who was asked to interview a girl who had been elected Rose Queen. In reply to his question asking what were the qualifications of a Rose Queen the girl informed him that the Queen was always the girl who was best looking and had the most charming personality, adding she had been found to have these qualifications. The author goes on: "The reporter replied, 'Yes.' The word itself meant nothing, but there was a wealth of meaning in the way he had said it. The girl had spoken vaingloriously about herself and in a careless moment the reporter had allowed his 'Yes' to mean, 'That's what you think. They all say that. I don't believe you're such a beauty anyway.'"

Naturally the girl was offended and she answered the remaining questions in snappy monosyllables. The reporter got a very poor story, but a rival paper came out with a really good article, full of additional and interesting facts.

Camera-Interviews

A NEW type of interview which is rapidly becoming popular is the "picture interview". This consists of several pictures of the interviewee with comments from the interview underneath.

There is a big scope for interviews of this kind and the idea is one which can be widely applied.

It is, for instance, ideally suited to the requirements of most trade papers—such as those catering for

hairdressers, butchers, outfitters, bakers, fishmongers, milliners, and so on.

You may have living in your district a representative of one or more of these trades who is fairly well-known. If you have, send a preliminary letter to the editor of the trade paper concerned, tell him of your idea, and submit a set of questions which you propose asking at the interview. Naturally these questions should have a close connexion with the trade covered by the paper.

Another possible market is the local paper. For this you will need to get hold of men and women well-known in the town, and the questions asked must have a direct bearing on the life of the town. Properly handled this idea will appeal to any local editor and may quite easily develop into a series running through several issues.

The more pertinent your questions the more likely will your feature be to prove popular.

With regard to the pictures themselves, it is advisable to take, say, ten or a dozen and pick out the five or six best. The type of person you interview is not the type with a lot of time to spare and will not want to give more than one "sitting". Better, then, to have one or two more pictures than you want, than not enough.

The best place for the interviewee to pose is, of course, in surroundings best suited to his, or her, position. For professional people a library is an ideal place.

Pick out a few suitable sentences from the written part of your interview and ask the person being inter-

viewed to concentrate on one of these for each photograph. In this way you will get some arresting expressions and these, as much as anything, will help your features to sell.

Another variation of the same idea is to tackle a number of different people on the same subject. Supposing, for instance, there is a controversy in your town regarding the opening—or keeping closed—of cinemas on Sunday. You might ask a clergyman, a cinema attendant, a labourer, an office worker, and a person living next to, or near to, one of the cinemas concerned, what they thought of the idea, at the same time securing a photograph. You would get a variety of answers and a set of camera interviews which should prove exceedingly interesting to people living in the district.

Where to obtain Pictures

I PROPOSE now to show how any writer can obtain, usually *gratis*, illustrations for almost any type of article.

It would be putting it at a low estimate to say that during my free-lancing experience I have sold several hundreds of illustrated manuscripts, not a single illustration for which has been my own work.

Let me give an example.

A few weeks before I wrote this section I received a letter from the editor of *Home Notes* accepting an article, with eight illustrations, which I had titled *Stars Hitched to a Waggon*. I got the idea that an article describing the caravanning experiences of a

number of well-known film, stage and radio folk would make interesting reading. Moreover I had, what I thought, was a first-class title.

As soon as the idea came to my mind I cast about for suitable material. The first thing I did was to get a current copy of a magazine catering for caravan enthusiasts and pick out nine or ten of the leading firms advertising caravans. To each of these I sent a letter telling them about the article I was preparing and asking if they would give me the names of any film, stage or radio folk who had purchased caravans from them.

Within a few days replies had been received from the majority, and I had a list of over a dozen names which satisfied the conditions. To each of these I then sent a second letter asking if they would tell me something about their caravanning experiences and at the same time enclose a suitable photograph.

The replies I received from these letters enabled me to go ahead with my article—with the result already stated.

Not all my "victims", in this instance, were able to supply pictures themselves, but all either supplied them or told me where I could obtain them. For one I had to apply to a film company, for another to the makers of the caravan, and for a third to an Agency.

The makers of the caravan sent me several pictures, and these were interesting in that they showed the star concerned driving off with her caravan, with an aeroplane standing close by. She had flown to Birmingham to take delivery of the caravan and was just setting out for her summer holiday.

Business men, almost without exception, are only too pleased to supply the free-lance with photographs. They are quick to appreciate the advertising value of such illustrations, and often, when no suitable pictures are at hand, they will go to the expense of having photographs specially taken. Large firms, whose names are household words, usually have thousands of different prints in stock and the *bona fide* writer is welcome to the use of as many of these as he requires.

Railway Companies, too, know the value of photographs, from an advertising point of view, and are always willing to help writers when approached. Each Company has an extensive picture library of towns and villages served by its lines, as well as of running stock, stations, and so on.

I would mention also, in passing, that the leading Companies are pleased to consider suitable photographs, submitted by amateurs, which can be used in their Holiday Guides and on their leaflets. I once prepared an article on this subject (titled, *Snap Your Season!*), and in connexion with his general requirements the Advertising Manager of the London & North-Eastern Railway told me: "We are not only glad to consider good prints of subjects suitable to the needs of our advertising, but we are continually on the look-out for original and unique photographs." The Advertising Manager of the Great Western said: "This Company is always pleased to consider the purchase of good photographs for reproduction in their publications upon terms mutually arranged with the photographers, either for permission to reproduce the pictures or to include the negative and full copyright according to

circumstances. The subjects we are most particularly interested in are, of course, those which show something of the holiday spirit and good scenic pictures taken from new viewpoints, also pictures of camping life."

The British Broadcasting Corporation is prepared to let writers have photographs for illustration purposes, but charges a reproduction fee of 10s. 6d. for each one used. When applying for photographs it is important to state for what papers they are required so that an account may be sent direct from Broadcasting House. At the time of writing there are rumours that this fee may soon be abolished, but, in any case the reader will know if it is still in force because at the present time it is stated clearly on the back of each print supplied.

Letters inquiring about photographs should be addressed to the Press Information Department, and free-lances who make use of this service will soon discover that the officials in charge are courteous in the extreme and only too pleased to help in the preparation of manuscripts

Pictures obtainable from Broadcasting House are only of a kind which deal with broadcasting in an official way. You could not, for instance, obtain a photograph of a popular radio star with her dog, or one of her garden. (These, by the way, may seem rather absurd requests, but, as will be shown a little later, they are not absurd—if made in the right place.)

The type of picture you *could* obtain—and which I have personally obtained on innumerable occasions—is that showing, say, Clapham and Dwyer in front of

the microphone, Stuart Hibberd reading the news, or the Wireless Singers taking part in a service. You can also obtain pictures of Broadcasting House itself, the studios, and so on.

From radio pictures to film pictures is a very short jump and in connexion with these I would state, at the very outset, that, if you can show that you can use pictures at all, you can have as many film photographs as you like, merely for the asking. At present I have two large drawers full of them. No reproduction fee is charged in respect of any of these, Publicity Managers being satisfied if they see them in print.

All film companies have a special department for dealing with photographs—or “stills” as they are called—and it is possible to get pictures from any of the leading English or American film companies within a few hours, all the latter having offices in this country which always carry a large library of prints.

To give a list of the names and addresses of these companies here would serve no useful purpose since addresses are continually changing and, in England at any rate, new companies seem to spring up like mushrooms while others fade as quickly away. The best way of keeping in touch with film developments is, I have found, to make a frequent study of a trade paper like *Cinema*. Most of the addresses can be unearthed from a few issues and the editor will always supply any you cannot find.

Photographs obtainable from film companies cover many fields. You can always, of course, obtain pictures

of scenes from films. Also, you can get portrait studies of any stars under contract to a particular company. Then, too, you can get pictures illustrating stars and their pets, stars and their hobbies, stars and their cars, and so on.

Sometimes a film company will send a camera to a star's house and take several views of the interior and exterior. These can be used to illustrate articles dealing with stars and their homes. I have placed many articles of this kind, and one, which comes to my mind now, is worthy of a moment's consideration since it shows how good markets may sometimes be found in unexpected places.

I went into the local Gas Office to pay an account and saw on the counter a magazine called *The Flambeau*. I had never even heard of this particular publication before, and when I came to examine it I found that it concentrated on the uses to which gas could be put, and on gas appliances in general. I began to think, as I always do when finding a fresh magazine, if I could suggest an article to the editor. Then it came to my mind that I had some pictures of Anna Lee's home on Bankside, one of which happened to show her in her kitchen beside a gas cooker.

Having remembered this I wrote off to the editor and suggested an article on Anna Lee's home in general, and pointed out that the article in question would contain a brief reference to a gas cooker, and would be accompanied by a photograph showing that cooker.

The editor replied to the effect that he had never, as yet, published any outside material but that the idea appealed to him and he would be glad to consider

it. I sent the article along, and within a few days received payment for it—at my own price!

If you can show you have a likely market for an article on a film subject and the company you approach has no suitable illustrations, it will often go to the trouble of getting special ones taken for you.

As an example of this, I once thought of writing an article around the studio wood-working department—the place where all the scenery is made. I found a market for the article and when I approached one of the English film companies for suitable pictures the Publicity Manager went to the trouble of having a set of six taken specially to meet my requirements.

From the British Museum, or the South Kensington Museums, it is possible to obtain excellent photographs connected with a variety of subjects. A charge of one shilling or one shilling and sixpence is made for each print supplied, but no reproduction fee is demanded. In order to illustrate the type of print available I would mention two which I have used recently: (1) a picture of a grandfather clock (for an article describing how to tell the age of these clocks); and (2) a picture of a page from an early nineteenth-century book.

Another section of this guide has been devoted to *Sources of Information*. It would be wasting space to list these again here, but all are worth bearing in mind when photographs are required in connexion with the subjects they cover.

Photographic Press Agencies

ONE very important source of supply for pictures for illustration purposes is the Photographic Press Agencies.

There are several of these Agencies willing to co-operate with the free-lance, and I have always found them courteous and obliging. Some charge 1s. a print plus a reproduction fee; others a reproduction fee only. No reproduction fee is payable, of course, unless reproduction actually takes place.

Fees vary with different Agencies and for different types of pictures. The average is 10s. 6d., but sometimes as much as a guinea will be charged. For the particular photograph mentioned in connexion with the *Home Notes* article a fee of 14s. was demanded. Personally, I always expect a commission of 25 per cent from an Agency for the introduction of business, and seldom fail to get it. I find it is never offered, as a general rule, and one has to ask for it in order to obtain it.

Who pays the Agency's fee? Here no hard and fast rule can be laid down. In my own experience I have found there are as many papers which pay the fee direct as there are which include it in the author's cheque and expect him to settle up. It is advisable, therefore, to know how one stands in this matter immediately an article is accepted. It is also advisable to state clearly on the back of an Agency print that a fee *is* payable, and what that fee is.

One of the leading Agencies is almost certain to

be in a position to supply pictures on any particular subject. Thus the wideawake writer need hold back no article for lack of illustrations. The only snag is the reproduction fee which, at times, swallows up a good part of the total sum received; but this is the exception rather than the rule, and even when it does occur one has the satisfaction of knowing that the illustrations have sold a block of words which might otherwise have had no cash value at all.

The procedure for obtaining prints from Agencies is a simple one. Send your request, making sure you have said *exactly* what you want, and within a post or two you will receive a batch of prints from which you can make a selection. I have had as many as 30 prints sent at a time—which serves to show how really helpful Agencies try to be.

Here are the addresses of a few of the leading Agencies:

Exclusive News Agency, Roehampton, S.W.15.

Fox Photos, 6 Tudor Street, E.C.4.

Dorien Leigh Ltd., 7 Cromwell Place, S.W.7.

Sport & General Press, 2-3 Gough Square, E.C.4.

Topical Press Agency Ltd., 10-11 Red Lion Court,
Fleet Street, E.C.4.

Another Agency I would mention is Journalistic Photo Distributors, of Ludgate House, Fleet Street, E.C.4. It is often possible to obtain suitable illustrations from this firm, and I have always found the Manager helpful and obliging.

The same firm is worth bearing in mind if you are

looking for a reliable Agency to handle your prints on a low commission basis.

Does it pay to Specialize?

YES.

Does this mean, then, that a free-lance should concentrate on one subject, to the exclusion of all others?

No.

What it does mean is that it is advisable to have one particular subject (or perhaps two or three) about which one thinks and writes more than about any other. My speciality, for a number of years now, has been *Film, Stage and Radio features*. I have had articles on one or more of these branches of entertainment in nearly 100 different publications, and have acted as regular correspondent to four. But my activities in this direction have not prevented me from selling hundreds of articles on other subjects—ranging from literary articles to *John o'London's Weekly*, to short gardening paragraphs to *Popular Gardening*.

It is interesting to note, however, that whenever an editor sends me an unsolicited request for an article—which is not infrequent—it is invariably connected with the subject in which I specialize. If I had never made a speciality of this, or any other subject, commissions of this kind would never have come my way. This experience points to one of the many advantages of specializing.

I would strongly advise every reader of this book to

specialize in some subject. What the subject is matters very little, as long as it has a wide appeal. It need not necessarily have a *popular* appeal. I know of one free-lance, for instance, who earns £10 a week in his spare time writing on architecture and decoration. He will not write at less than three guineas a thousand words. In little over a year he worked up a world-wide connexion and is never without a number of commissions on hand.

If you know sufficient about a subject like architecture and decoration, or have enough interest to keep on digging out new facts on the subject, subjects such as this are ideal for specialization. They seldom come within the range of the average free-lance, and editors who publish articles relating to them are often at their wits' ends to know where to get suitable material. They are seldom offered more than they can cope with.

It is sometimes a little difficult to make contact with the right markets, but one has the satisfaction of knowing that as soon as a market *is* found it is usually retained.

Many writers specialize in ordinary everyday subjects and make an attractive income from them. Frances Pitt, for instance, is widely known for her articles on nature topics, and her income from the articles she writes probably runs well into four figures. The name of Claude Fisher is known to all editors who use articles on hiking; Elizabeth Craig has made a name for herself in connexion with cookery articles; and Sid G. Hedges is the name which springs to the mind when thinking of swimming.

These writers are the best known in connexion with their particular subjects, but this does not mean that they are the only writers, of any standing, specializing in these directions. There are scores of other writers selling nature articles regularly, and there is probably room for scores more. I could name, offhand, several free-lances who supply editors with cookery articles, and Claude Fisher is by no means the only writer who concentrates on hiking.

The thing to do is to select a subject (1) which interests you, and (2) about which you know something. Having done this, get together all the facts you can and keep your facts as up to date as possible. Many writers find it an advantage to subscribe to a Press Cutting Agency. One of the best Agencies is Durrant's Press Cuttings, St. Andrew's House, 32 & 34 Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C.1. An Agency will send you cuttings, relating to any subject, cut from all the newspapers and magazines published in Great Britain. The charge is usually one guinea per 100 cuttings.

As soon as you find a market for articles on the subject in which you are specializing, make a note of it. Add to the list as frequently as possible, and use it often.

Writing for Children

IN more than one section of this book I have referred to the juvenile article and mentioned possible markets for it. I therefore propose to confine this

section to a few helpful paragraphs regarding the way in which juvenile work should be prepared.

Do not try to educate the child in the sense that he understands school education. Remember that he spends the major portion of his waking day in school, and he looks upon those who provide his reading as friends to whom he can turn in relief directly lessons are finished. This does not mean that he will refuse to read anything instructive. On the contrary, he likes to be taught—but not history or geography, or the way to add up and subtract.

Tell him, in an interesting manner, about the biggest aeroplanes in the world and what they can do, or about the construction of a motor-cycle and how he could set about making his own, and he will sit up and take notice. The growing boy or girl has a strong creative instinct. Pander to this and your work should find a ready sale.

Whatever you are writing for the modern boy or girl—be it article, story or paragraph—one thing must stand out. That is, enthusiasm for your subject. The juvenile mind is riotously enthusiastic. It seizes upon a subject or a cause and there is no dissuading it, for a time, from the point of view that it is the only subject, or the only cause, in existence.

While you are writing, treat your subject as though you lived for it and for it alone. Work yourself into a frenzy of enthusiasm rather than take a detached and academic point of view. Let the child see that you not only know what you are talking about—that you have studied the subject from every angle—but that you yourself are keenly interested.

One of the outstanding traits of human nature is the longing to pass on a good thing. The child recognizes this trait and, if you are sufficiently enthusiastic, he will be certain he is hearing a good thing.

When writing for adults you have to keep your sentences and paragraphs short and snappy. If this is necessary in appealing to the adult mind, then it is doubly necessary in appealing to the mind of the child. Make your point in a short sentence of short words. Clinch your argument in a short paragraph of short sentences. Make every word pull its weight and every sentence stand out from the page. Only so will you *appeal*.

The fault with most writers of articles for children is that they mingle their juvenile writing with their writing for adults. They do not specialize enough. If you are a full-time free-lance do nothing but juvenile work for one day. If you are a spare-time writer, begin and finish your juvenile writing at one sitting as far as possible. You can prune and polish afterwards. Imagine a child near you, and that you are telling him what you are writing. Have a dream child of your own, and write for him alone. In doing so you will find that you are writing for thousands of children.

Juvenile Annuals

FREE-LANCES who are at all keen on writing for children should not overlook the opportunities afforded by juvenile Annuals. Dozens of these are published every year and hundreds of contributions

are needed to fill them. Payment, as a rule, does not exceed a guinea a thousand, but in the majority of cases is made on acceptance.

One advantage of writing for the *Annuals* is the fact that a contribution rejected by one publisher may quite easily appeal to two or three others, their requirements all being so very much alike.

Most publishers who specialize in *Annuals* are prepared to consider manuscripts at any time of the year. There can be no doubt, however, that manuscripts receive the most favourable consideration which are submitted either in the spring or in the autumn. It is at these periods of the year when the majority of publishers get the material for their *Annuals* together.

A preliminary letter is advisable since the editor of an *Annual*, unlike the editor of an ordinary magazine, often finds it impracticable to have more material on his hands than is required for the issue he is at present considering. By sending a preliminary letter one can always ascertain if there is any space available, and not infrequently a definite commission will follow.

Those who wish to write for this particular market should bear in mind that the readers of juvenile *Annuals* range from six to sixteen years, and that articles should invariably appeal to children between these ages.

Length does not seem to be of great importance, although it is advisable to keep within 4000 words.

To indicate the type of article used I might mention the titles of a few I have placed myself. These include, *A Visit to a Film Studio*, *All About Airships*, *Give Your Friends a Shadow Show*, *Handkerchief Tricks* and *A Trip on a Liner*.

The leading publishers of Juvenile Annuals are Amalgamated Press Ltd., Blackie & Son, Ltd., Wm. Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., Religious Tract Society and Frederick Warne & Co., Ltd.

Never destroy a Manuscript

AT the outset of your career make a rule never to destroy a manuscript.

Many years ago I wrote an article on *Chess in Literature*. I sent it to the editor of a literary weekly, but it was turned down. I could not think of another likely market for it, but I had faith in the manuscript and believed that a suitable market would turn up for it sooner or later. A few months ago a paper called *Chess* made its appearance. The article was sent off to the editor of this paper, without alteration, and was immediately accepted. This is not an isolated experience but is one of many and serves to show that it is never wise to destroy any manuscript.

I spoke about this subject once to Beverley Nichols and this very successful writer told me of an experience of his own.

"The first time I went to America," he said, "I was comparatively unknown. I resolved, none the less, to make a determined effort to break into the American press, and with this end in view I carefully studied American life, from the viewpoint of a stranger, and wrote up my impressions in the form of several short articles. Each of these manuscripts went to between 20 and 30 editors, and all were returned with regrets.

"A few months ago I was packing to go to America again and came across these old manuscripts. Without altering a word I had them retyped, and when I reached America submitted them to the editors who had previously rejected them. I sold every one, first time out, at 20 dollars each!"

Book Writing

IF you have a wide knowledge of one particular subject, it is a good idea to put that knowledge into book form. There are publishers waiting to accept books on nearly every subject under the sun—providing the writers tackle the subject from a new angle, or have something to offer which has not been put up in book form before.

The next time you visit the Public Library, and have a couple of hours to spare, walk slowly along beside each shelf of books and note the titles. You will get many surprises. Note also the variety of subjects covered, and then tell yourself that the books in the room around you, and the subjects covered by those books, represent but a small proportion of the output of the large publishing Houses.

Remind yourself, also, that publishers do not cease to publish as soon as they have a list of books bearing their name. No, they are always bringing out new books and are therefore always pleased to consider fresh manuscripts.

As soon as you have an idea for a book which you think should prove saleable, collect together as many facts as you can and then arrange them in some sort of

order. Now go carefully through the list of publishers in *The Authors', Playwrights' and Composers' Handbook* until you come to a publisher who specializes in the type of book you have in mind. (You will note, by the way, that not all publishers are interested in *every* type of book. In fact, you will find that few of them are; they nearly all specialize). Write a carefully worded preliminary letter to the publisher you select and put your idea before him. Send with your letter a brief synopsis of the contents, and mention that if he is interested you will be pleased to send a more detailed synopsis, together with a specimen chapter. If he asks to see the latter, and finds it to his liking, he will most probably give you a definite commission to prepare the book, and will send an Agreement for you to sign.

It is not necessary, here, to go into the several clauses contained in a publisher's agreement since these are set out and explained in the *Handbook* referred to above.

If you are not lucky with the first publisher you try, try another. Go through the list until you have tried every one you think worth trying—it is more than likely that the last will prove the most interested!

If you can illustrate your book, say so. Book illustrations are being used more and more every year. Submit a sample print with your preliminary letter and make certain it is a good one. Only first-class pictures find their way into books.

Suitable lengths vary considerably with subject and publisher, and it is as well, when sending the preliminary letter, to set limits and leave it to the publisher to

name a definite figure. You would say, for instance, that you could arrange to prepare a manuscript of any number of words up to 80,000. The publisher might reply that this length was suitable or that he preferred one of, say, 60,000 words.

How much remuneration may one expect to get for the writing of a book? Everything depends upon the sales and the price. The publisher will seldom offer the writer a lump sum down—the writer would be unwise to accept it if he did!—and the usual arrangement is a percentage on sales. The writer may be offered 10 per cent on the published price of the first 2000 copies sold, and 12½ per cent after. This means that, with a 60,000 word book selling at 5s., the sales must reach 2500 copies before the writer receives a guinea a thousand for his work. And it has to sell a further 4000 copies before he sees three guineas a thousand back.

You may be thinking it is better to stick to the writing of thousand word articles. That depends upon the book you write. It may easily sell to the tune of 10,000 or 15,000 copies, but, in any case, your name on a book will make it easier for you to sell articles dealing with the subject covered by the book. You see, editors come to regard you as something of an authority—and because of that your work interests them.

Selling to America

AS soon as your articles begin to appear in British magazines, you can start thinking about American markets. There are many openings across the Atlantic for articles written by free-lances in this country, but, strangely enough, not one writer in a hundred ever stops to think about them. Yet payments, in most cases, are higher, decisions prompter, and editors more courteous.

It is a common thing for an American editor to send a long friendly letter, when returning a manuscript, and sometimes an alternative market will be suggested. I have even known editors, on their own initiative, to post unsuitable manuscripts to other editors (sometimes on rival papers!), and for sales to be effected thereby.

American editors are always pleased to mail specimen copies of their papers and invariably send two or three copies of each. As an example of their courtesy in this respect I might mention here that a short while ago I sent a request to David C. Cook Publishing Co., Elgin, Illinois, for copies of five magazines which they publish. To cover cost of these and postage I enclosed a small Money Order. Within a few days I received a large parcel of magazines and, under separate cover, a letter and cheque. The letter was worded as follows:

Dear Friend,

We take pleasure in mailing you samples of our papers in which you are particularly interested, and

since we make no charge for samples, we are refunding the cash sent us.

Yours very cordially,

Many writers are under the impression that submitting articles to the American Press is a lengthy process. It is not. More than once I have posted letters to an English editor and an American editor on the same day and received a reply from the latter before receiving one from the former. Letters to and from America seldom take more than a week each way and it is quite reasonable to expect a reply within three weeks.

Postage is another question which troubles would-be contributors. They have an idea it is very heavy. Again, it is not. You can send a single ounce letter for $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ and after that the cost rises only by one penny per ounce. Thus, 2 oz. cost $2\frac{1}{2}d.$; 3 oz. cost $3\frac{1}{2}d.$; and so on. The weight limit is 4 lb. Parcels up to 3 lb. can be sent for 2s.

"Yes, that is all very well," I can hear some readers saying, "but how does one send *return* postage?" There are two ways: (1) in the form of International Reply Coupons; (2) in the form of American postage stamps. Although the former is the method generally adopted, the latter is the less expensive. International Reply Coupons can be obtained at any Head Post Office and cost sixpence each. They only cover postage, however, on a single ounce letter. American postage stamps may be obtained direct from any American Post Office. Send a Money Order (not Postal Order) to the value of the stamps required. The American

postage rate, for letters to this country, is 5 cents for the first ounce, and 3 cents per ounce thereafter.

Another question I have heard raised is in connexion with the cashing of American cheques. Is this easy? Quite.

American editors sometimes make payment by Money Order, and sometimes by cheque. The former, of course, can be cashed at any Post Office. A cheque, however, will have to go through a Bank, and the banker will require *2d.* for cashing it. He may not perhaps cash it straight away since the Bank's method of getting rid of American drafts is to auction them. You may have to wait until the result of the auction is known.

American currency is in the form of dollars and cents, the former being worth round about *4s. 2d.*, and the latter one halfpenny. Values vary slightly from day to day, although, in the case of the dollar, never more than a penny or so. I have just cashed a 13 dollar cheque for *£2, 13s. 3d.* This works out at slightly more than *4s. 1d.* to the dollar. Another time, a cheque of equal value might realize *£2, 13s. 10d.*; or it might even fall as low as *£2, 12s. 10d.*

If you have not a banking account of your own it is advisable to ask a friend who has to cash your foreign cheques for you. This will save you a lot of trouble.

Before you can hope to see your work published in the American Press you must learn something about the requirements of American editors. There is not room in this book to give a list of the publications open to the free-lance, much less to give an indication of their main requirements. The best thing I can

suggest is that you purchase a reliable Market Guide. There are several of these published in America, but the one I consider to be the most useful is *The Writer's Market*. The price of this is 12s. 6d., and the publishing address is Writer's Digest, 22 East 12th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio. *The Writer's Market* gives the names, addresses, and editorial requirements of over 2500 places to sell manuscripts, and every line of information in it came direct from the editor of the market listed.

While, however, I cannot give a list of markets, and detailed requirements, I can give you an indication of the kind of article for which there is a steady demand.

First of all there is the trade Press article. Not only can one place general articles with trade paper editors, but there are plenty of openings for articles telling, in an interesting way, what business men are doing on this side of the Atlantic. Articles dealing with new ideas are especially welcomed, as are also those which put a new angle on salesmanship. News paragraphs are also considered, but these must naturally have an American interest. American trade papers usually carry a large number of pictures, and it is therefore advisable to send photographs whenever possible. An illustrated article stands a better chance of acceptance than one without illustrations, and the payment received is appreciably bigger.

Secondly, there is the juvenile article. There are far more openings for juvenile material in the States than over here—particularly for short practical articles. Articles of 300 to 400 words, of the "How-to-do-it"

kind are in big demand. Most editors like either a line illustration, or a photograph, to accompany such articles. Well-written articles dealing with scientific subjects are also favoured.

Another type of juvenile article, for which there is a wide market, is what might be called the *semi-religious article*. Nearly all the large religious bodies in America have their own publishing departments, and some of them issue a dozen or more different magazines calculated to interest boys and girls of all ages up to eighteen or so. *Preachy* articles are definitely not wanted, but the editors strive to make everything they publish uplifting in tone.

In the third place I would mention travel articles. These are featured by several editors and deal with all parts of the world. Articles which describe native customs, or deal with the natural history of a country, are favoured most. It is essential that all such manuscripts be accompanied by suitable illustrations—the more the better.

One advantage of working up an American connexion is that it is often possible to sell to American editors articles which have already appeared in print in this country. Make sure you have parted with only the British rights in the first place, and when offering to an American editor state clearly that publication has already taken place over here, and that you are in a position to offer second rights only. It is a good plan to send a printed copy of your article, rather than a typed manuscript.

Study as many American publications as you can. Look particularly for words which are spelt differently

from ours, and for nouns which differ from ours. The American, for instance, speaks of a "lift" as an "elevator"; of a "tram" as a "street car"; and so on. His spelling of "through" is often "thru", and he leaves out the "u" when writing "colour". If you can adopt this "Americanese" when writing for the American Press, you will please editors since it will save them a good deal of sub-editing.

Filing Negatives

EVERY camera-journalist should adopt some easy system of filing negatives. A lot of selling opportunities are undoubtedly missed through keeping negatives in odd places and in no proper order. Apart from the fact that it is almost impossible to find a negative when it is required in a hurry, one often forgets certain negatives unless they are constantly brought to mind, as is the case when one is frequently looking through a file.

If you do not possess a large selection of negatives, it is a satisfactory method to store them in tins—cigarette tins of the flat-fifty variety are ideal for this purpose—and keep each tin for one particular subject. Stick a label on the front of each and devote one to *Animal Studies*, another to *Child Studies*, another to *Churches*, and so on.

When your collection becomes a big one, however, you will have to adopt a more ambitious method. Here is one which I follow myself, and which I find very satisfactory.

As soon as my negatives are developed I make one print of each (contact prints on gaslight or self-toning paper, to save expense). I number each print on the back and place a corresponding number at the top of the negative. For this purpose I use Indian ink since this is durable and shows up well.

For filing purposes I procure envelopes, as near as possible to the size of my negatives, and in boxes of 250. The boxes serve as filing cases.

I number the envelopes to correspond with the negatives and prints and then add the subject. Beneath this I write any suitable captions which may have come into my head, and the rest of the envelope is used for remarks of a general nature. Into each envelope I put a negative and its print.

Using an ordinary Exercise Book I index the subjects, and underneath each subject I write the numbers of the negatives which are connected with them.

In this way I can see at a glance what negatives I have, can find any particular negative quickly, and can always tell exactly what sort of a print any negative is likely to make.

If you have the time to spare a better method still, probably, is to paste the prints in cheap albums, instead of putting them in the envelopes with the negatives. Number them to correspond with the numbers on the negatives.

Is an Agent worth While?

EVERY writer, at some time in his career, is led to wonder if he might not fare better by entrusting the submission of his work to the care of a reliable agent.

To some the question occurs fairly early. Disheartened by repeated failures, they imagine a literary agent may be a modern counterpart of Cinderella's fairy godmother who can change pumpkin manuscripts into fairy-coach cheques by the waving of a magic wand.

Others do not begin to think about it until they have dug themselves in, and the reason that prompts it then is not to be found in their failures, but in their successes. Generally speaking, the agent is not for the tyro—the possible exceptions being those beginners who aspire to become playwrights or novelists, or whose fancy leads them to the writing of non-fiction of book length.

An agent sees more possibilities in a play or book than the average writer may even know to exist. In these days, for instance, there are often several valuable translation rights to consider, and few writers have the remotest idea of how to offer their manuscripts to foreign publishers whose language is different from their own. Whatever one's standing, therefore, it is always advisable to give an agent the opportunity of handling a manuscript of book length—unless, of course, you can obtain a commission before actually writing the book.

Writing in an issue of *World's Press News*, Mr. Ivor Nicholson, of Ivor Nicholson & Watson Ltd., said:

"I am greatly indebted to the established literary agencies for their co-operation in building up our business. . . . I do not see how a successful general list could be fashioned without some assistance from the established literary agencies."

This statement indicates the standing which reliable agencies enjoy with publishers, and serves to show how fitted they are to handle book length manuscripts for known or unknown writers.

The services of an agent are hardly worth enlisting when it comes to articles of 1000 words or less. That, at least, is my own experience. I have an agent who can work wonders with lengthy manuscripts and special features, but who is not nearly so successful with short general articles as I am myself.

This is easily explained.

During a long free-lancing experience I have made contact with a large number of markets, and, consciously or subconsciously, every idea which presents itself to me is made to relate itself to one or more of these markets.

Ideas and markets always seem to go hand in hand in my thoughts. When I get an idea I invariably get a market with it; and when I think of a market I can nearly always think of a subject suitable for an article to send to it. It has not always been so, but has come with experience.

I am firmly convinced that the writer of articles can do far better for himself, in the long run, by submitting his own work than by sending it in bulk to an

agent. The only way in which free-lancing can be made to pay regular dividends is by working up a wide connexion.

Such a connexion, however, can be worked up only by studying *carefully* a number of markets and submitting manuscript after manuscript until, sooner or later, regular acceptances result.

For special features of two or three thousand words, for series, and for articles containing particularly valuable subject-matter the services of an agent should always be enlisted. In nine cases out of ten he will obtain a higher price for such material than would the author. By virtue of his experience an agent is naturally better able to assess the true value of a manuscript.

The best agents work on commission only—varying between 10 per cent and 20 per cent, but usually 15 per cent, and they will not handle your manuscripts unless they consider there is a reasonable chance of their selling. This, after all, is only good business.

A list of reliable agents is to be found in *The Authors', Playwrights' and Composers' Handbook*, but before sending full length manuscripts to any of these it is advisable to give a rough idea of its contents, in a preliminary letter, since agents are not always specialists in the selling of *every* type of manuscript.

If an agent has been handling a particular manuscript for a fairly long period—say a twelvemonth—without success, it is a good idea to call it in and revise it. If one continues as a writer it is astonishing how weak and uninteresting last year's manuscripts often seem in the light of more recent experience. A manu-

script called in and revised in this way may often meet with acceptance when sent on its rounds again.

As soon as you have done business with an agent make a point of calling on him for a short personal chat. He will be as pleased to meet you as you will be to meet him, and once he knows you personally he will have you in his mind, and may occasionally find it possible to put forward suggestions which may result in acceptances.

It is a good plan to make personal contacts with as many men and women connected with writing as possible. You can never tell where such contacts will lead.

What to Read

THE question "What shall I read?" is almost as important as "What shall I write?" If your reading is to be helpful it must be selected with care.

To begin with, you should have a sound knowledge of the London newspapers. The best way of getting this is to study them at regular intervals. One week, for instance, take the *Daily Mail* in the morning, and the *Star* in the evening. The next week take the *Daily Express* in the morning and the *Evening News* in the evening; the next the *Daily Herald* in the morning and the *Evening Standard* in the evening; and so on. Study particularly the Leader Page, Home Pages, Paragraph features, and special features.

If you can afford it, get a copy of the Saturday edition of one or two provincial newspapers—such as *Glasgow Herald*, *Birmingham Mail*, *Liverpool Echo*,

and *Manchester Evening News*. (I mention the Saturday editions because there are sometimes more features in these than in those published on other days.) If you live in a town of any size you will probably find you can get copies of some of these cheaply from the Public Library. In any case, a newsagent can always get them for you if you place an order.

It would be foolish to think of taking all the weekly and monthly periodicals—there are more than 2000 of them!—either regularly or at varying intervals. An endeavour should be made, however, to keep well acquainted with those which are likely to prove profitable markets for the kind of article you are able to write. Magazines falling into this class will vary with different writers.

Apart from these periodicals try to afford a few weeklies like, *Answers*, *Tit-Bits*, *Pearson's Weekly*, and *Weekly Telegraph*. They are excellent for providing one with ideas, and the subjects they cover are wide and varied.

Be always on the look-out for new magazines. If you can possibly afford it, subscribe to the first few issues. It is always easier to get into a paper that is just beginning than into one which is long established.

If you are not already a member of the Public Library, become one at once. The non-fiction section of such a Library can prove of untold worth to the enterprising free-lance. I never go into the Library in my own town without thinking of the debt I owe to it.

Keeping Records and Accounts

NOW that you have nearly reached the end of this book, and are ready to start work in earnest, let me call your attention to the importance of keeping proper records and accounts. Your writing is a business and you must carry it on in a business-like manner.

Keep a detailed record of all the manuscripts you submit. This is how I keep mine.

I use ordinary box filing cabinets (costing 5s. or 6s. each) and filing cards measuring 5" \times 3" (costing a few shillings a thousand). I divide my file into the following sections:

1. *Articles submitted.*
2. *Articles accepted.*
3. *Articles published.*
4. *Articles paid for.*

I will take a card at random from this file and trace its progress through the four divisions. Here is one headed "Make Your Snaps Win Money".

As soon as an article is ready to send out I take a new card and write the title on the top. Next to this I put the number of words and the number of illustrations. On the first line of the card I write the date and the magazine to which the article is being sent. The card then goes into the first division. Thus, at this stage, the selected card bears the following particulars:

Make Your Snaps Win Money (800 words, 1 illustration)

4/3/37 Sent to "Exchange & Mart".

On 10th March, 1937, I received a letter from the editor of *Exchange & Mart* telling me he would be pleased to use my article in due course. As soon as this letter came the card was taken from the first division, the further detail, "10/3/37 accepted", was added, and the card then went into the second division.

The issue of *Exchange & Mart* dated 1/4/37 contained the article. The card was then taken from the second division, the further detail, "1/4/37 published", was added, and the card was then placed in the third division.

Payment came to hand on 17th May, and this was immediately entered on the card, and the latter was placed in the last division.

The completed card, as I have it before me now, reads as follows:

Make Your Snaps Win Money (800 words, 1 illustration)

4/3/37 Sent to "Exchange & Mart".

10/3/37 Accepted.

1/4/37 Published.

17/5/37 Payment of £1, 5s. received.

If you adopt, and follow, a system such as this you can see at a glance where any manuscript is, and how far it has progressed towards the payment stage.

About once a month I go through all the cards in 1 and 3, and if I think a courteous letter of inquiry is needed, in respect of any, this is written and posted. A note of this is made on the card and I also enter details of any reply received.

Naturally, cards are arranged in each division in alphabetical order.

So much for the actual records.

Another idea I adopted early, and have kept up ever since, is to make a carbon copy of every article submitted. I store these copies away in alphabetical order, and whenever I wish to refer to one it takes less than a minute to trace it.

What is of more importance than keeping accurate records of manuscripts, however, is keeping accounts of cash received and spent. Sooner or later the Income Tax people will want to know all about it, and if you are unable to produce proper accounts you may find yourself called upon to pay more than you should. Whether you derive the whole of your income from writing, or only a few odd pounds, you are liable to tax. Clause 8 of the form headed "Notes in regard to the statement of income" states clearly that the taxpayer must enter in the space provided in Section B all income "from casual or isolated literary activities".

An elaborate system of book-keeping is not necessary. If you get an ordinary Cash Book you can enter on the left-hand page details of all payments received; and on the right-hand side all money expended. The latter will include stationery, postages, magazines and newspapers purchased, travelling expenses, films, enlarging, chemicals, and so on.

If you are a full-time writer, or derive a fairly large income from spare-time work, it will pay you to have your accounts audited by an accountant. This may cost a couple of guineas, but may effect a considerable saving in tax.

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. . . . And so to the end of the book and what, I trust, has been pleasant and instructive reading.

In the various sections we have considered, together, the main questions connected with the business of free-lancing. I have endeavoured to show you how to prepare saleable articles; and where to place them when you have written them. I have given illustrations, from my own experience, to guide you. And I have pointed the way to success in every branch of free-lance writing.

The rest is up to YOU.

Set to work with a will, determined never to give up, and never to be upset by rejections or disappointments. Do not curse every editor who returns a manuscript, or yield to the temptation to fling your inkpot out of the window and be done with it! Windows cost money to repair, and it is not the time to waste ink when there are no editorial cheques to replenish the supply!

Keep ever in the front of your mind the indisputable fact that what matters most in free-lance work is the IDEA. Play up to this, *and you must succeed.*

Here's hoping you do!

